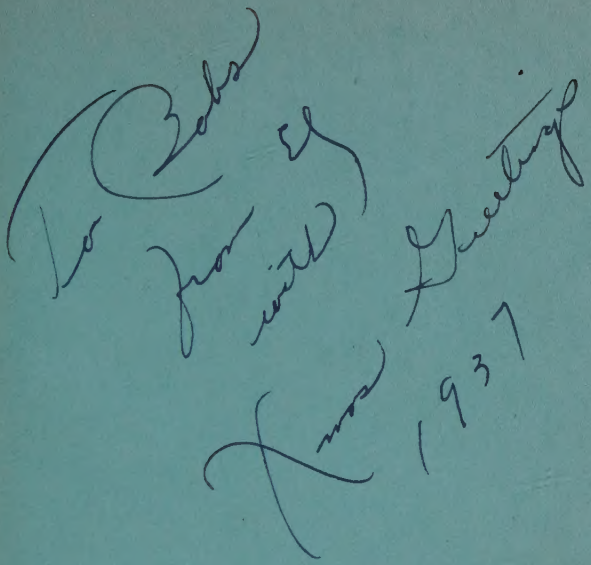
The GIRL SCOUTS

ON THE RANCH

EDITH LAVELL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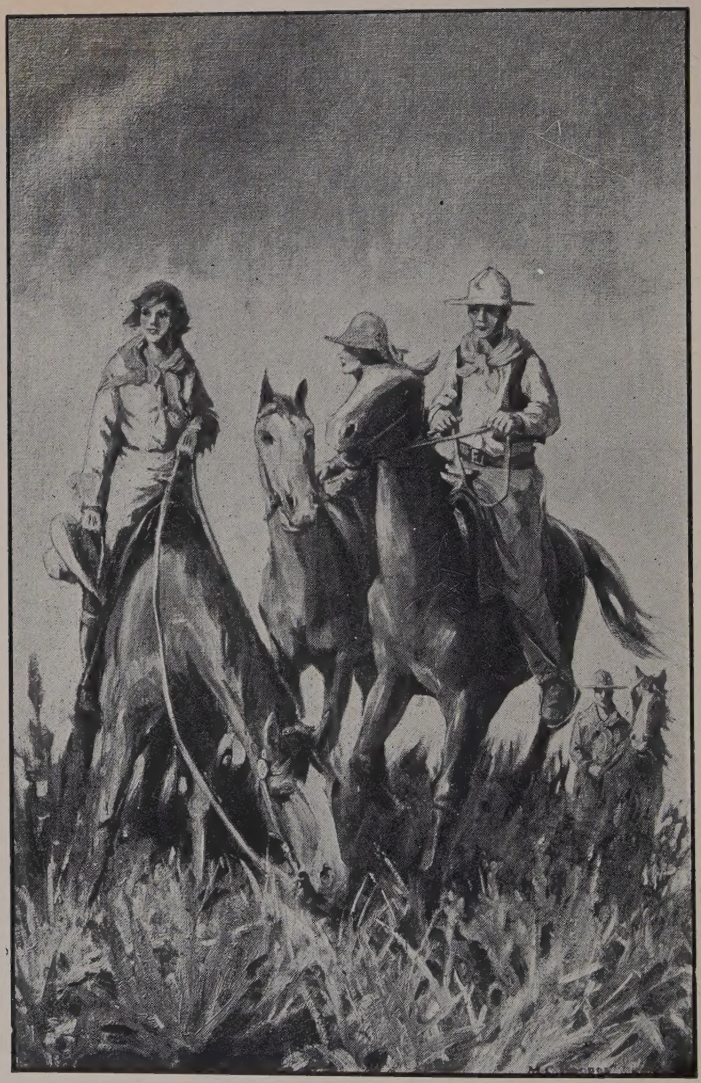

As soon as they had concluded their breakfast, Kirk, Marjorie and Daisy started back for camp.
(*Page 200*) (*The Girl Scouts on the Ranch.*)

THE GIRL SCOUTS ON THE RANCH

By EDITH LAVELL

Author of

"The Girl Scouts at Miss Allen's School," "The Girl "Scouts' Good Turn," "The Girl Scouts' Canoe Trip," "The Girl Scouts' Rivals," "The Girl Scouts at Camp."

A. L. BURT COMPANY

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THE

GIRL SCOUTS SERIES

A Series of Stories for Girl Scouts

By EDITH LAVELL

The Girl Scouts at Miss Allen's School
The Girl Scouts at Camp
The Girl Scouts' Good Turn
The Girl Scouts' Canoe Trip
The Girl Scouts' Rivals
The Girl Scouts on the Ranch

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THE GIRL SCOUTS ON THE RANCH

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CHAPTER I.

COMMENCEMENT WEEK.

EVERY door and every window of Miss Allen's Boarding School stood wide open in hospitality to welcome the guests of the graduating class. For it was Commencement Week, and visitors were coming from far and wide to see the exercises.

Upstairs in the dormitories, confusion reigned everywhere. Trunks, half-packed, their lids wide open and their trays on the floor, lined the hallways; dresses were lying about in profusion on chairs and beds; great bunches of flowers filled the vases and pitchers; and rooms were bereft of their hangings and furnishings. Girls, girls everywhere! In party dresses or kimonas they rushed about their rooms or bent over their trunks in the hall. Everybody seemed in mad haste to accomplish the impossible.

"I knew you'd be sorry, Marj!" said Lily. "I never could understand why you asked Griffith."

"I guess it's because he's so stunning looking, and I knew he would make a hit with the girls."

"But John Hadley is good looking, too!"

"But not in the same way Griffith is. And you have so few dances with your partner!"

Smilingly, she threw herself down upon the bed and closed her eyes. Lily was right; she must be fresh for the dance. The class president could not afford to look weary and tired out. In a few minutes she was fast asleep.

The rest, which Marjorie so sadly needed, was the best beautifier the girl could have employed. Had her mind been on such things, her mirror would have told her, as she dressed, that she looked better. Her color was as fresh and pink as the roses she wore at her waist, and her eyes sparkled with greater brilliancy than ever.

Marjorie, modest as she always was, could not but be conscious that the eyes of everyone were turned approvingly towards her as she entered the dance hall on the arm of her handsome partner. When the music of the first dance began, and she started off with Griffith, she felt a thrill of pride at the grace of his dancing. Momentarily, she was glad that she had not invited John; no other young man of her acquaintance possessed all the social requisites to

such an extent as Griffith. And, as she had remarked to Lily, they had only three dances together, and practically no intermissions, for as class president, it was her duty and her privilege to act as chief hostess. She tripped around from one group to another, introducing people, talking to everybody, sometimes taking Griffith with her, sometimes leaving him with Doris Sands or Mae Van Horn or Lily—wherever there seemed to be an interesting group. She had no time for strolls in the moonlight between dances, or intimate little tete-a-tetes on the porch; she used every minute of her evening for somebody else. When the last waltz finally started, Griffith declared that he had seen nothing of her during the evening.

"But you haven't been bored?" she asked, with concern.

"No, indeed!" he replied, with sincerity. "Your friends are all charming!"

It was when they were strolling back to the school that Griffith asked,

"What do you intend to do this summer, Marjorie?"

"I really don't know," she replied. "I want to get away somewhere, and get good and strong for college next year."

"Why not come to Maine?" suggested the young man.

"Yes, I'd like that—but I don't know what papa is planning. It all depends upon him. But he won't tell me a word."

"Aren't the Girl Scouts going camping?" asked Griffith.

"No; the captain, Mrs. Remington, couldn't go, and at present we have no lieutenant, so we let the whole matter drop. I'm sorry, too, for I know I'm going to miss it all dreadfully."

"And when do you expect to know your father's plan?"

"Tomorrow, I hope," she answered.

They had reached the school now, and they paused at the doorway. Marjorie put out her hand.

"You can't come tomorrow?" she asked.

"No, I'm sorry," said Griffith. "I'd love to, but we have a frat meeting. You'll write?"

"Yes, if you write first. Well, goodnight!"

The young man pressed her hand.

"Goodnight—and thanks for a wonderful evening," he said.

Marjorie turned about and hurried up the stairs. In spite of the rush and excitement, she was not tired. She wanted to talk it all over, to discuss the girls' partners and dresses, the music, the flowers, the refreshments. To her joy she found Lily already in their room She threw her arms about her in ecstacy.

"Oh, wasn't it all wonderful, Lil!" she cried. "Come, let's sit down and talk it over."

But, to her astonishment, she found Lily's mood totally different from her own. The other girl seemed quiet, subdued, happy, but in a dreamy sort of way. And although she agreed with everything Marjorie said, she volunteered very little conversation on her own part. Apparently absorbed in her own thoughts, she began mechanically to undress. Marjorie contemplated her in amusement.

"Lil, I bet you don't even know what color Doris's dress was!" she said laughingly. "You're so in the clouds."

Lily flushed in admission of the accusation, making no attempt to deny it.

"How many dances did you have with Dick?" pursued Marjorie, teasingly "More than the law allows, I'll wager!"

"Why—five or six," replied Lily. "Really, I didn't count them."

"No, I guess you didn't! Well, suppose we get into bed. I won't bother you any more—I'll leave you to your dreams."

"It isn't that, Marj," replied Lily. "But we do need the sleep. Tomorrow's Commencement, you know."

Marjorie's parents were among the first guests to arrive for the exercises. Although too busy to meet

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Marjorie's parents were among the first guests to arrive for the exercises. Although too busy to meet

each train, the girl kept a constant watch for them from the window of her room. She saw them as soon as they entered the school grounds, and bounded down the stairs, so that she might meet them before they reached the door.

"Jack is waiting for us at the out-door auditorium," said Mrs. Wilkinson, after they had kissed each other. "He thought that he had better go and reserve seats."

As Marjorie was all ready for the exercises, except for getting the bouquet of American beauties which John Hadley had sent her, she accompanied her parents across the campus. When they were within sight of the amphitheatre, she recognized her brother Jack, facing her, talking with a man and a woman whose backs were turned in her direction. Something in the manner in which the young man stood, and held his shoulders, gave Marjorie a thrill. It must be—it was—John Hadley!

Jack waved to her across the lawn, and instantly John Hadley turned around and greeted her cordially. In another minute the party was together.

"Perhaps we better get some seats," suggested Jack. "At least for the ladies."

The older people sat down, and Marjorie and the two young men stood near them. The former had only a few minutes at her disposal.

"Was your dance dress all right?" asked Mrs.

Wilkinson, with motherly concern. At a glance, her experienced eye had taken in every detail of her daughter's appearance, and she was thoroughly satisfied.

"Lovely! Perfect!" answered the girl, appreciatively. "And so were all the others. I'll have to go somewhere very gay this summer," she remarked with a sly, questioning look at her father, "to wear such lovely clothes!"

"Would you prefer Newport or Bar Harbor?" he asked, mischievously.

"Neither, papa, thanks. I've had a wonderful time this week, and, in fact all this year; but I'd be perfectly willing not to go to another party all summer. I've been gay enough to last a life-time

"Well, it certainly hasn't seemed to hurt you,' observed Mrs. Hadley, looking approvingly at the girl's pink cheeks.

"No; but too much of it would," said her father. "Well, perhaps you will like my plans for your summer, then!"

Marjorie seized her father's arm, and looked pleadingly into his eyes.

"Please tell me, papa! Please!"

"No, I can't! It wouldn't be fair to the rest!"

"The rest of whom?" she demanded.

"The rest of the Girl Scouts!"

Marjorie uttered a little gasp of pleasure; it was

just what she wanted most of all. How she had dreaded the thought of the separation from her best friends, and the dissolution of that wonderful senior patrol of theirs which had gone together to Canada to represent the Girl Scouts of the whole United States!

"If you're sure there are scouts in it," she said, "I won't ask any more. I'm perfectly satisfied!"

She turned to go, and John asked for permission to stroll back to the building with her. It was the first time he had seen her since the Spring vacation.

"I suppose you are still working hard?" she asked, casually.

"Yes—so—so," he replied, lightly dismissing her question. He was more interested in the subject she had been discussing with her father.

"Marj, don't you really know where you are going this summer?" he inquired.

"I haven't the faintest idea," replied the girl. "I know only just what papa said, which you heard: somewhere with the Girl Scouts."

"Well, whenever you do go, I wish I could spend my two weeks vacation at the same place!"

"Probably you can, for I don't think we are going to any girls' camp, or anything like that."

"But you might be going to Europe, or California," he observed.

"No, I wouldn't want to travel this summer—I'm

too tired. And I'm sure mother realizes that, if papa doesn't.

John looked at her seriously.

"I wouldn't be in your way, Marjorie?"

"No indeed!" she replied, heartily. "Let's make it a bargain! We'll have your vacation together—provided, of course, your mother is well enough to go."

"Oh thanks!" he said, fervently.

They had reached the main building now, and Marjorie stopped at the door-step.

"Come see me next Sunday!" she said, cordially "Lily will be there, and perhaps some more young people."

"I'd be delighted!" said John, turning to leave her. But he would have preferred to have an invitation for a time when he might see her alone.

Marjorie entered the building, and made her way to the room where the rest of the graduating class were gathered. With a sharp pang of regret she realized that this was the last time they would ever be together as students of Miss Allen's school. No doubt they would often meet later as almunae, but it would never be the same. It seemed such a short time since they had entered as freshmen—when she and Ruth Henry had ridden up from their home town together, wondering what it would all be like. She was so thankful that Ruth had not dared to

come back to the school after her expulsion from the Girl Scouts the preceding summer; her absence had made the year singularly pleasant and peaceful. Yes, Marjorie Wilkinson had been happy during those four years of boarding school life, and she was sorry that it was all over.

As soon as she had entered the room, Lily rushed forward with her bouquet.

"Marj! You forgot your flowers!"

"Oh, thanks, Lil!" cried the other, gratefully. "And I forgot to thank John, too. But I'll see him again."

She arranged the American beauties on her arm, and fell into her place in the procession of girls who were to walk, two by two, to that pretty stage in the wooded part of the campus.

During the first part of the exercises, she kept her eyes steadfastly in front of her, listening with wrapt attention to the speaker, as he droned through his dry address. But it did not seem long to her; somehow she wished that he might go on forever, thus, by his act, keeping her a student at Miss Allen's. But, like everything else, it was over at last, and the principal gave the signal for the singing of the Alma Mater, which was to mark the conclusion of the exercises.

It was then that Marjorie looked about the audience, and allowed her eyes to rest upon John Had-

ley's. Dropping them for a moment, she looked at him again, mutely trying to make up for her omission in thanking him.

The young man understood her meaning, and was happy.

CHAPTER II.

GOODBYES.

MARJORIE saw her parents and the Hadleys only for a few minutes after the exercises were over, for almost immediately Mae and Lily came to drag her off to a luncheon, which was to be followed by the last class meeting.

As president, Marjorie naturally took the chair. Calling the meeting to order, she put through the necessary details, that the girls might return to their visitors as soon as possible. It was only when she mentioned the formation of some sort of permanent organization, whose purpose it would be to arrange for reunions and other activities, that she realized that the girls were in no hurry to adjourn.

"Is it your pleasure to elect officers, and frame a constitution?" she asked.

Immediately several girls rose to their feet in hearty approval of the suggestion. Discussion followed, and a unanimous acceptance of the proposition. Almost before she realized it, Marjorie was re-elected president for the coming year.

It was after three o'clock when the meeting broke up, and Marjorie and Lily decided to go straight to their room. Lily's parents had gone home immediately after the exercises were over, and Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson had invited the girls to supper at the inn with them that evening, so they had not planned to be with Marjorie in the afternoon. Both girls, therefore, felt that they were free for the remainder of the time.

Marjorie opened the door rather listlessly, picturing to herself the confusion of the room, and wishing to keep away from it as long as possible. But the packing had to be done, and there would be no opportunity so good as this one.

"Lil!" she exclaimed, as soon as they were both inside the door, "What are those suit-boxes on our beds?"

"I don't know," replied the other girl, going over to examine them. "They don't belong to me—" she paused, and looked at one of them closely—"yes, this one does, too! It has my name on it!"

"And the other has my name on it!" cried Marjorie. "They must be Commencement presents!"

With trembling fingers the girls pulled at the string and succeeded in loosening it. In a moment each had made her discovery. A brand new riding-habit of the most fashionable cut lay folded in each box.

"How wonderful!" cried Marjorie. "Yes, here's a card—from mother. But when are we supposed to wear them? I haven't any horse—"

"It must have something to do with our vacation this summer," surmised Lily. "Or maybe our parents are going to let us go riding every day."

"Let's put them on!" suggested Marjorie, holding hers up for a closer examination.

"No, we better not, Marj. Let's pack first, and get our work all done. I simply can't rest in all this mess."

"Righto!" agreed her room-mate.

The girls substituted middy blouses and bloomers for the Commencement dresses, and then fell to work with a will. Order began to come from chaos, and the room took on that bare appearance of the deserted dormitory in summer time. As they surveyed the results of their labor, both Marjorie and Lily grew increasingly cheerful; they began to forget that this day was their last at Miss Allen's, among so many dear friends, and their thoughts instead were of the future.

"Don't you wish we knew what we were going to do this summer?" asked Marjorie, for perhaps the tenth time that week.

"Yes, but I do love a mystery. Remember last summer—how we didn't know whether we were going to the training camp or not—and then later when

we hardly dared dream that Pansy Girl Scouts would be the ones to go to Canada."

"Yes," said Marjorie; "and everything always seems more thrilling in reality than we ever hoped it would be. So perhaps, this summer will be, too."

"Your father said something about Girl Scouts—oh, don't you wish the whole senior patrol could be together?"

"It is my dearest wish," replied Marjorie, earnestly.

The appearance of a maid at the door to remind them that the man would call for their trunks in ten minutes put an abrupt end to this pleasant conversation. Without another word, both girls set themselves to finish their task.

"There's just time for a nap before we dress for supper," said Lily, dropping on the bed.

"Of course I wouldn't have said anything to mother or papa," said Marjorie thoughtfully, "but I do wish we didn't have to go to the inn tonight. It's our last supper here, so I care more about the companionship with the girls than about having good food. I want to be with our best friends—Alice, and Doris, and the rest."

"Cheer up, you'll have breakfast with them tomorrow," reminded Lily. "And we can come back early this evening, and maybe wear our riding-habits to visit them."

Marjorie's face brightened at the suggestion.

"It's Friday night, Lil!" she exclaimed, suddenly. "Oh. if our senior patrol could only get together for one last meeting! Just think—is it possible we're out of active membership of the Girl Scouts forever?" Her voice became disconsolate, and she uttered the last word almost in a whisper.

"But we won't be," said Lily, reassuringly. "We're both going to start troops of our own in the fall. And besides, I shan't give up hopes for this summer until I hear what your father tells you tonight."

Both girls were in their kimonas, ready for their brief nap. Almost as soon as they stopped talking and closed their eyes, they fell asleep, exhausted from the strain and excitement of the week.

Neither realized how long she had been asleep; each sat up at the same moment, awakened by a continuous knocking. Someone was at the door.

"My gracious, what's that?" cried Lily. "It must be late, Marj! How long do you suppose we have slept?"

Mechanically, patiently, the knocking persisted. Whoever the visitor was, she evidently did not intend to give up until she received an answer.

"We've got to open the door, though, goodness knows, we haven't any time for callers," said Marjorie, pulling on her slippers.

Before she reached the door there came another volley of knocks, then a whisper, followed by sounds of smothered laughter. The visitors were evidently in high good humor. Sleepily, and with an excuse half-formed on her lips, Marjorie opened the door. To her immense surprise, not one, but five girls confronted her—her five best friends in the Girl Scout troop. She burst into laughter.

"Do come in!" she exclaimed.

"We were sure you were dead!" said Alice Endicott, one of the most vivacious girls in the troop. "We've been knocking for hours!"

"Not really?" asked Marjorie, seriously. "Oh, what time is it?"

"Quarter of six!" answered Doris Sands, consulting her watch.

"And we're to be at the inn at quarter past for dinner with your father and mother!" cried Lily, in alarm. "Marj, we certainly will have to rush!"

"Yes," announced Alice, "we're all going—that's the reason we are here. I've heard of parties where nobody came but the hostess, but a party without the hostess would be rather odd!"

She seated herself comfortably on the couch, and the others followed her example. Marjorie listened incredulously to what she had told them.

"You're invited too? Why, that's perfect! But why didn't papa tells us?"

"Oh, you know he's always strong on surprises," remarked Lily. "I think this is a dandy. But don't stand there like a bump on a log, Marj! We've got to dress."

In less than ten minutes the girls announced their readiness to start. Florence Evans reminded them both, however, not to forget their flowers.

"Flowers?" repeated Lily. "Oh, yes, I'd forgotten. Of course we seniors all have them."

"Seniors?" questioned Marjorie, a trifle regretfully. "We're graduates now, Lil. Florence and Alice and Daisy are the seniors now."

But in spite of the imminence of the separation, Marjorie became gay again. The evening promised to be very enjoyable, almost, it would seem, a repetition of old good times. Mae Van Horn, Doris Sands, Alice Endicott, Florence Evans, Daisy Gravers, Lily, and herself—with the exception of Ethel Todd, all of the dear old senior patrol that shared the wonderful experiences of last summer would be together. Surely it was no time for regrets!

Linking arms, and humming the Girl Scout Marching-song, they proceeded across the campus to the village. All the girls wore dainty summer dresses, with light wraps or silk sweaters, and went without hats. There were no bobbed heads now among the group; the style was considered passé,

and the girls with short locks disguised them with nets.

They reached the inn just in time, and found Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson waiting for them on the porch. Two tall white benches on either side of the door seemed to invite them hospitably to be seated. The girls gratefully dropped into seats.

"Why is the door closed?" asked Marjorie, after she had expressed to her parents her appreciation of the delightful surprise party.

"I guess it's cold inside," replied Mr. Wilkinson, with a twinkle in his merry brown eyes.

"Oh it isn't, papa! You're hiding something!" cried his delighted daughter. "I know you!"

"You aren't satisfied, then?" he asked. "You want something more? Some young men, I suppose?"

"No I don't!" protested Marjorie, emphatically. "I hope John and Jack went home, as they expected, for I'd rather have the girls all to myself tonight!"

"Well then, what is it you do want?" he pursued.

"Nothing, papa. I'm perfectly happy. But I just asked a simple question: why, on such a warm night as this, should the door be closed, when there is a perfectly good screen-door in front of it?"

"Don't tease her any more, dear!" remonstrated Mrs. Wilkinson. "There is a reason for having it closed, Marjorie, and it is another surprise for all

of you. Two more guests are waiting for you inside, but they're of the feminine gender, as you seem to desire."

"Oh, who?" demanded all the girls at once.

"What two people would you most rather have with you tonight?" asked the older woman.

"Ethel Todd, for one!" cried Marjorie.

"And Mrs. Remington!" put in Lily and Alice, both in the same breath.

At this dramatic moment, Mr. Wilkinson threw open the door, revealing the very two people desired, smiling at the girls' surprised expressions. The scouts all jumped up and rushed forward, and a great confusion of embracing followed. Before they had calmed down, the landlady appeared to announce supper.

Following her into a private dining-room beyond the main tea-room, they found a charming table set for ten. A big bowl of purple pansies stood in the center, surrounded by candles of the same color; and at the four corners of the table there were bows of purple ribbon. The place-cards represented hand-painted scout hats, decorated with wreaths of the same troop flower.

"It's lovely! I feel just as if it were a real scout party again!" cried Marjorie, joyfully.

"That's exactly what we've tried to make it," explained her father, gratified at her obvious pleasure.

"And so many surprises in one day," continued the girl, after everyone was seated. "Our riding-habits—you must see them, girls—and this party, and Ethel and Mrs. Remington—"

"And flowers from John," teased Alice.

"Well, I simply couldn't stand anything more!" concluded Marjorie. "I'd just die!"

"And here I was just about to tell you about the best one of all!" interrupted her father. "But now I guess it wouldn't be safe."

"Oh, you simply must now!" urged Marjorie. "It isn't fair to keep us all in suspense!"

"But you said you couldn't stand any more!"

"I could stand that one!" laughed Marjorie.

"Well, I'm going to let Mrs. Remington tell you this one," he said. "But wouldn't it be better, perhaps, to have some dinner first?"

The girls acquiesed, and gave their attention to the inviting fruit-cups before them. In the conversation that ensued the graduates, who had been the recipients of all the attention for the past week, were glad to retire to the background, to give Ethel Todd and Mrs. Remington the center of the stage. They talked about college, and the future of Pansy troop without its distinguished leaders. Almost every possible subject was discussed except the one in which the girls were most interested: namely, their captain's plans for their vacation.

When they had finally finished their ice-cream, served in such beautiful pansy-forms that they hated to eat them, and the candies and nuts were being passed, Mr. Wilkinson called upon Mrs. Remington for her announcement. Eight eager pairs of eyes turned hopefully towards their captain, for somehow all the girls felt that in some way their own fate was connected with the surprise Mr. Wilkinson had planned for his daughter.

"Well, girls," she began, as she looked from one to another of the expectant faces about the table, "Mr. Wilkinson asked me what he thought Marjorie would like to do best this summer, and I replied, without the least hesitation: something with the Girl Scouts—and particularly with the members of the senior patrol. Was I right, Marjorie?" she asked, turning to the girl.

"Yes, yes," cried Marjorie. "Go on, please!"

"So you see that naturally necessitated my working out a plan and consulting the other girls' parents. I thought of a great many places to go, but I wanted something entirely different, and yet, at the same time, some out-door vacation. So finally I hit upon a plan which I hope will suit you all. At least, it suits your parents; I have their consent for every girl here—including Ethel."

"And it is—" cried two or three scouts at once.

"Something to do with horseback-riding!" ven-

tured Lily, thinking of her own and Marjorie's latest graduating presents.

"Yes. You are all to spend July and August on a ranch in Wyoming!" said Mrs. Remington.

"July *and* August?" repeated Marjorie, jumping out of her seat, and rushing toward her father's chair. "Two whole months?"

"It isn't too long, is it?" he asked.

"It's heaven!" she cried, throwing her arms about his neck.

The candles were burning low now, so Mrs. Wilkinson suggested that the party adjourn to the porch to enjoy the moonlight, while they discussed the proposition to their hearts' content. The girls asked innumerable questions, many of which, however, Mrs. Remington could only partially answer.

"I'm sorry, girls, that I shall not be able to go with you," she said, "but I couldn't possibly leave home that long. But you will get along all right. The ranch is almost like a private place, and Mrs. Hilton, the proprietor's wife, will act as chaperone. And you only need one in name."

"And when do we start?" asked Lily.

"The very first day of July," replied the captain.

The girls fell to discussing what clothing they should take, and Mrs. Remington told them, to their surprise, that they would live almost entirely in riding breeches. Warm, sensible clothing, and

undergarments that could be easily laundered, were necessities; and perhaps a silk dress to wear on the trains. But they would find no use for fancy summer costumes, she said.

"Suppose all our Commencement dresses are out of style when we get home!" wailed Lily. "Won't it be a shame!"

"Well, you can still go to Newport, if you prefer!" teased Mr. Wilkinson; but Lily was horrified at the thought.

"But what I like best," said Marjorie, as the girls made a move to go, "is the fact that we'll be together for two months—the longest vacation we have ever had!"

"Do you suppose you can stand it all that time away from John Hadley?" asked Mae, in a low voice, at her side. "That will be too far for him to visit you, you know."

Marjorie frowned; the remark recalled her promise to John that very morning to go to a place where he and his mother might join her. A wave of regret spread over her; she hated to go back on her promise, but of course it was too late to change the plans now, even if she had wanted to. Anyone would be foolish to give up a whole summer for the sake of a two weeks' vacation.

"Oh, I guess we'll meet lots of Western boys," she answered, carelessly. "I don't expect to pine away."

Mr. Wilkinson accompanied the girls back to the school, and although it was nearly half past ten, Marjorie and Lily insisted that he wait down stairs while they put on their riding-habits and returned, proudly, to show themselves to him. Then they made the round of the scouts.

CHAPTER III.

THE WEEK-END AT THE SHORE.

COMMENCEMENT was over, and Miss Allen's Boarding School had been closed for a week. Marjorie Wilkinson was home again.

For the last few days everything seemed strangely quiet and unnatural. No bells rang in the morning to arouse Marjorie from her much needed rest; there were no classes or meetings to attend; no gay functions at night that kept her up till the small hours. She accomplished her unpacking in less than an hour and arranged her room so that it seemed as if she had never been gone. Her old favorite books were back in her secretary-desk; her pictures were in their former places on the walls; her school pillows were again on the wide window-seat, and her monogramed ivory set on the bureau. As far as outward appearance went, the girl was perfectly at home.

And yet the strangeness of the life, in spite of the familiarity of her surroundings, impressed her as it had never done before during a summer vaca-

tion. Her old friends had vanished, and her new ones were too far away to take their places. Ruth Henry, her chum from childhood, who had afterward proved herself to be such a traitor, had moved to New York to finish at a fashionable boarding school. Harold Mason was spending his summer at a young men's camp, and her brother Jack had taken a vacation position at a hotel in Atlantic City. There was no one left in town whom she knew intimately.

For a while, however, Marjorie was too tired to deplore this absence of friends and excitement. She was glad of the chance to sleep, to read, and to visit with her mother. She went over her college catalogues, marking the studies she intended to take in the Fall, and she examined her wardrobe with the view of selecting the things she would like to take with her to the ranch.

But when the week had finally passed, and Lily Andrews arrived for the promised visit, she knew she was thankful for the companionship.

The girls greeted each other as effusively as if it had been a month, instead of a week, that had separated them.

"But I'm afraid it will be pretty slow for you, till the week end, at least," said Marjorie, apologetically, as she started the motor. "There isn't a thing doing—the town's practically dead."

"Why, isn't there tennis — and driving — and canoeing, an—?" asked Lily.

"Oh, certainly!" interrupted Marjorie. "But I mean no dances or parties, or even young men to call!"

"I don't believe that will worry me much," laughed the other. "But say, Marj, couldn't we go horseback riding—just to practice up a little, you know?"

"Yes, we can hire horses, of course. That's a dandy idea!"

Marjorie said nothing more about the week-end until they were comfortably established on the porch after Lily's things had been disposed of. Then she mentioned it again.

"You don't seem a bit excited about the week-end," she remarked. "We're going away!"

"Why, of course I'm thrilled!" Lily hastened to assure her. "Where are we going?"

"To Atlantic City—the hotel where Jack is clerking. And mother has invited Mrs. Hadley and John."

"That's great!" cried Lily, rapturously. She had loved the seashore from childhood. Then, at the mention of John Hadley, she asked whether Marjorie had told him of her plans for the summer.

"No, I haven't," replied her companion. "I tried to when I wrote to thank him for the roses. But

somehow I didn't know how to tell him, because you know we had partly arranged to go to the same place this summer. It seems sort of like going back on my promise!"

"Well, you couldn't help that," returned Lily, consolingly. "But I'm sure he won't be angry."

"No, maybe not angry, but hurt, perhaps. Still—scouts have to come first, don't they, Lil?"

"You bet they do! Particularly as this is probably the last thing you and I shall ever do as members of Pansy troop!"

"And that reminds me," said Marjorie, "I wanted to ask you whether you thought we couldn't keep our organization, and have regular scout meetings at the ranch. And we could wear our uniforms once in a while, just for old time's sake, you know."

"Indeed I do approve of that idea!" cried Lily, with spirit. "Let's keep our senior patrol as long as we possibly can."

"I sort of hesitated to suggest it," continued Marjorie, "because I am senior patrol leader, and I was afraid it might look as if I were trying to keep all the power I could get."

As Lily listened to these words, a new thought came into her mind. She seized upon it immediately; it was a veritable inspiration.

"Marj! I have it! You're eighteen now—let's get you commissioned as lieutenant!"

"Lieutenant—of—Pansy—troop?" repeated Marjorie, overcome by the wonder of such a proposal. When the older girls had received their commissions, she had looked upon them with awe and admiration, but it never seemed possible to her that she could hold the same office as Edith Evans and Frances Wright. She had always dreamed of becoming an officer—perhaps, in time, a captain—over a troop of little girls. But to be first lieutenant of her own troop—that seemed utterly out of the question.

Certainly," replied Lily. "I'll write to Mrs. Remington this very minute, and she'll get your examination papers." She was on her feet now, starting towards the door. "We have ten days yet," she added, "we can easily put it through."

But Marjorie still seemed reluctant.

"It wouldn't be fair, Lil—without consulting the other girls."

"Nonsense! Would they have elected you senior patrol leader, two years in succession, if they didn't want you? Would you have been made class president and first alumnae president, if you weren't popular? Why, they'll be tickled to death! And won't it be fun to spring a surprise on them!"

"You mean not say a word about it to them, till everything is settled?" Marjorie showed plainly that she disapproved of the suggestion.

"Of course! Tell them that Mrs. Remington

wouldn't let us go without an officer, and that some awful stick of an old maid has been made our lieutenant, and will join us somewhere on our trip out. Oh, I can just see Alice's expression now! Won't she be furious!"

The humor of such a situation dawned upon Marjorie, and she joined in Lily's amusement. Then, after a little more persuasion, she consented to the writing of the letter.

The girls did not have to wait long for the answer; indeed, they were surprised at the rapidity with which it came. But then Mrs. Remington always attended to matters promptly, and this all the more so because she approved so heartily of the proposal.

Marjorie was delighted to find that the examination was comparatively easy; after the more difficult merit-badge tests she had taken the previous summer at training camp, this one seemed almost like child's play. She took it into the library, signed the pledge of honor to answer the questions without assistance, and set immediately to work. Inside of an hour the paper was finished, sealed in an envelope, and dropped into the mail-box.

On Friday afternoon the whole family went in the automobile to Atlantic City. Marjorie and Lily occupied the front seat, with the former at the wheel, while Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson rode in the tonneau.

The girls were not very talkative; both were absorbed in their own thoughts. Marjorie went over and over in her own mind the best way to tell John her plans for the summer. Probably it would make no difference to him, and yet she wished the ordeal were over. She would hate so to offend him.

A slight accident to the motor delayed them for a couple of hours at a garage, bringing them to the hotel in Atlantic City at something after five o'clock. Jack met them and informed them that the Hadleys had already arrived, and had gone to their rooms. They would meet in the lobby at six o'clock to go into the dining-room together.

"Don't say a word about our trip to the ranch, Lil," pleaded Marjorie, as the girls were unpacking their suit-case. "I want to break it to him gently—in case he should be peeved."

"I know he's going to be terribly disappointed," said Lily. "But I'll be very careful, Marj."

Reassured by her chum's promise, Marjorie went gaily down to the lobby at the appointed time. John's first words, however, took her somewhat aback; he had not forgotten her promise."

"This certainly is jolly of your mother," he said. "And more than I ever dreamed of. An extra week-end with you—besides our two weeks in August."

Marjorie winced at the reference, and closed her lips tightly. She could not tell him now, before all

those people, that her plans were changed. So she merely smiled, and turned to Mrs. Hadley.

Having secured permission for extra time off, Jack felt particularly gay, and acted as host of the party. Mr. Wilkinson noticed with what genuine courtesy he carried the thing off, and judiciously retired to the background. Indeed, it seemed as if the boy even regarded his father and mother as guests.

The others of the party responded to his mood, and the meal was a jolly one. It was only when he announced that he had procured seats for Keith's theatre that evening, that the girls found their spirits sinking. For Lily would have preferred to spend the time looking at the ocean, and Marjorie longed for the opportunity to have a tete-a-tete with John.

But if the girls were disappointed at this announcement, they were dismayed at the young man's next remark. All unconscious of the situation, he blurted out to John's surprised ears the unwelcome news of the girls' project.

"What do you think of these wild girls, Hadley?" he asked, while they were all waiting for their dessert. "Imagine them strutting around in trousers all summer, on a ranch in Wyoming! I'll bet they join the cowboys, and never come back!"

"What? *What?*" demanded John, in a most per-

plexed tone. Marjorie had said nothing about any such plans.

"Oh—haven't the girls told you yet? Well, there hasn't been much time. Still—I thought you and Marj kept up a steady correspondence!"

"The steadiness is all on my side," replied the young man, quietly. Then, louder, "No, I didn't know a word about it. Tell me!"

Marjorie hastened to relate all there was to tell: her father's desire to plan something particularly nice for her for this vacation, Mrs. Remington's suggestion, and the Girl Scout party. John said nothing about his shattered hopes, but Marjorie saw that the slight had cut deeply. If only she had written to him! But it was too late now for regrets.

She did not find an opportunity until the following afternoon to apologize for her failure to explain the project to John. The party, which had stayed together all morning on the beach and in the ocean, decided to go their separate ways after luncheon. Mr. Wilkinson joined a fishing excursion, and Lily and the two older women planned to take naps. Jack found it his duty to be in the office if he wanted the evening off, so John seized the chance to ask Marjorie to go walking. She was only too glad to accept.

Taking the car as far as Ventnor, so that they might avoid the crowd and the shops, they started

their walk in the prettier part of the town. Marjorie plunged immediately into the subject that was uppermost in both minds.

"John," she began, "I didn't mean to go back on my promise, and I wanted to tell you all about it before anybody else did. But you see papa and Mrs. Remington planned everything; I had practically no say in the matter."

John regarded her intently, wishing that he might believe that she was as keenly disappointed as he was because they were not to be able to spend the vacation together. But no; she certainly did not appear heart-broken.

"You're not sorry, though," he said, somewhat bitterly. "The whole thing suits you exactly."

"It would be a lie to say it didn't," laughed Marjorie, good-naturedly. "You know how I adore that sort of thing."

"Marjorie," he pursued, "do you think that—that —" he hesitated, as if he did not know how to put his thought—"that sports, and Girl Scouts, and things like that, will always come first with you?"

Marjorie seemed hurt at his words; he was accusing her of being cold and unfeeling.

"I don't know what you mean!" she returned, sharply. "Do you imply that I care more for things like that than for people? That I like horseback-

ridding and hiking better than mother and father and Lily—"

"No, no! I didn't mean that. Of course I know your family and Lily come first. But men, for instance? It seems to me you'd always rather go off with a pack of girls on some escapade than see any of your men friends."

"Maybe I would," laughed the girl, heartlessly. "But," she added, "perhaps I'll wake up some time!"

"When?" he asked, seriously.

"Maybe when I fall in love!" she returned, teasingly.

John knew that now she had adopted this frivolous manner, it would be useless to pursue the subject further. So he put the thing out of his mind temporarily, forcing himself to talk of other things.

But when, an hour later, he was alone in his room, he made a new resolution. Marjorie had treated him shamefully by not writing to him of her plans, by allowing his hopes to be dashed so rudely to the ground by a third person. It was evident that she did not care for him—that she had never cared, and it was foolish of him to pursue her. In the future, therefore, he meant to treat her with the same polite indifference with which he accorded the other members of her sex; if he was nothing to her, he would show her that she was nothing to him!

That evening and the following day, he shared

his attentions equally with both girls, and although nothing was said, when Marjorie drove away in the car, she felt that something was wrong. She feared she had lost the friendship of a young man for whom she had the utmost regard and respect. And she was sorry—but not sorry enough to make an effort to re-establish it on the old footing.

Resolutely, she thought of the ranch and the Girl Scouts, and talked volubly to Lily on both subjects. She was rewarded, it seemed; for when she reached her home, she found her lieutenant's commission waiting in the mail-box!

CHAPTER IV.

DAISY'S SISTER.

The eight Girl Scouts who were going to the ranch met at the Grand Central Station of New York. Although there were to be only eight travellers, there seemed to be about thirty or forty people in the party, so many friends and relatives had come to see them off.

Luckily, the girls' luggage was all cared for by someone else, for there was not a scout in the party who was not laden down with baskets of fruit or boxes of candy. Doris Sands and Marjorie Wilkinson each wore bunches of roses—those of the latter however were a gift, not from John Hadley, but from Griffith Hunter.

The girls themselves seemed almost too excited to give much thought to their presents. They tried to listen to innumerable admonitions and messages at the last minute, and finally got into the train with only a hazy idea of what everyone had said. But they all looked supremely happy.

As soon as they were comfortably settled, and the excitement had died down so that normal conversation was in order again, Marjorie began to wish she might tell the others about her commission. It was only with the greatest effort that she restrained herself.

Neither had Lily forgotten the all important subject; so as soon as she found a chance, she blurted out her announcement.

"Girls!" she said. "I have the most exciting news to tell you! Guess what it is!"

"What? What?" demanded two or three at once

"Marj is engaged?" suggested Alice, always anxious for romance.

"Don't be silly!" said Marjorie, frigidly.

"Well, you'll never guess, so I might as well tel you," said Lily, amused at Marjorie's indignation "We are to have a scout lieutenant to chaperone us this summer."

"Who?" demanded Florence Evans, excitedly "Not my sister Edith?"

"No—nobody like her. You couldn't imagine two people more different; in fact this woman is different from anybody else we ever had in the troop She is really an awful old maid—about seventy, I guess—and wears spectacles, and thinks girls of seventeen or eighteen are mere infants. She—"

Lily rejoiced to see the girls all growing furiously

angry. How did such a thing ever happen? Was this Mrs. Remington's doing? Ethel interrupted Lily by demanding, sharply,

"What's this dreadful person's name?"

Lily had not thought of a name for her. So, under the necessity of inventing one on the spur of the moment, it sounded perhaps a trifle too prim.

"Miss Prudence Proctor!" she announced, avoiding Marjorie's eyes.

Florence let out a soft whistle. The others looked equally dismayed. It was Alice who demanded a full explanation.

"Mrs. Remington wrote for us to keep a watch for her, that she might join us anywhere from New York to the ranch."

"How are we to know her?" asked Ethel.

"I'll know her," answered Lily. "I met her once."

"And is she really so awful?" asked Alice, a little more hopefully.

"She's dreadful!"

"Marj," said Ethel, suddenly suspicious, "why aren't you saying anything? What do you know about her?"

Marjorie could hardly keep from laughing; in her struggle with the corners of her mouth, the tears came into her eyes.

"She's—she's impossible!" she stammered, hiding

behind her handkerchief. "She's really the most disagreeable person I know."

"Worse than Ruth Henry?" asked Alice.

"Yes," murmured Marjorie, again almost losing control of herself.

"Girls," said Doris, who was always sensitive to another's discomfort, "let's change the subject. I don't understand it, but Mrs. Remington must have had a reason for putting this woman over us. Anyway, we can't make it any better by talking about it."

"It looks like one of Ruth Henry's tricks to me," said Alice, bitterly.

All this finally became too much for Lily; she was choking now, and she feared that if she stayed another minute she would give way entirely. Rising hastily, she made some excuse about getting a glass of water, and disappeared into her own compartment.

By making their reservations early all the Girl Scouts had managed to travel in the same car. Lily and Marjorie had one compartment together, and Ethel and Doris another; the rest of the party had been satisfied to travel in berths.

Although Doris, Alice and Lily had all been to the coast before, they had taken the trip during their childhood, with their parents, and had forgotten most of the details. Everything, therefore, seemed

new and fascinating to them all; they were in no hurry for the days to pass which would be spent so enjoyably before they even reached the ranch. They would read and play cards to their hearts' content; and then, when they were tired of everything else, they could always talk with each other.

To many people much older than these Girl Scouts the novelty of eating on a train has never lost its charm, so it is little wonder that they looked forward to each occasion with a keen sense of pleasure They were thankful, too, as they entered the diner for their first meal, that there were eight in their party; it would mean that they might always eat by themselves, if they were fortunate enough to secure two tables. They were careful to keep their voices low, and to avoid drawing any undue attention to themselves; but, in spite of this, more than one fellow-passenger looked enviously at the happy party.

When supper was over that first night, the girls, by general consent, congregated in Marjorie's compartment. It was the larger, more comfortable of the two, and afforded a lovely private sitting-room.

"Shall we play bridge?" asked Doris.

"No, let's just talk," replied Marjorie, who sensed the prevailing sentiment of the group. "Only—not about the lieutenant! I couldn't bear that!"

"We'll never mention her till she appears!" ex-

claimed Alice, loyally. "There—will that be a relief to you?"

Lily looked distressed. Was all her fun going to be denied her in this fashion? But Marjorie good-naturedly came to her rescue.

"No, Alice, I'd rather get used to talking about her now, so that I won't make a fool of myself when she does appear. You can say whatever you like; it really doesn't matter to me!"

"Well, don't let's talk about her, anyway," said Doris. "I'm sure we can find a more agreeable topic of conversation. Let's everybody tell what she is going to do next year!"

"That will be interesting!" cried Lily, enthusiastically. "Where shall we begin?"

"With the oldest," answered Doris. "That's you, Ethel."

"Well, you all know about me," said the girl. "I'll be a sophomore at Bryn Mawr."

"And I'm going to a finishing school outside of Boston," volunteered Doris, briefly. "Who's next—Marj or Lil?"

"I am," said Lily. "I'm not sure what I am going to do. I'd like to go to college, but I'm the only child in my family, you know, and mother wants me home—papa travels so much."

"I'm entered at Turner College," said Marjorie.

"And if I have anything to say about it, Lily will go too!"

"But how about her mother?" asked Mae.

"Her mother can have her all the rest of her life!"

"It's likely," laughed Mae. "She'd be married the week after college closed!"

"Mae!" remonstrated Lily, "don't judge others by yourself! Now—what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to business college, and I hope to take a position by the first of the year."

"That certainly sounds interesting," said Doris. "Well, I suppose there isn't any use asking our seniors. You three are all going back to Miss Allen's, aren't you?" she asked, turning to the youngest girls in the party.

Florence and Alice both nodded assent; but Daisy sat still, staring into space. It was evident from her attitude that something was troubling her.

"I'm sorry," she said, quietly, after the short pause, "but I can't go back."

"Why not?" demanded two or three of the girls at once. Mae was just about to make some teasing remark about getting married, when, catching sight of the girl's expression, she took the warning to be careful.

"We can't afford it," said Daisy, sadly. "Mother had to choose between this trip and my last year at school, and, for the sake of my health, she chose

this. I'm really glad, for my best friends are here, and I can get my diploma later at night school."

The girls were absolutely silent for a moment, nonplussed at their chum's announcement. No one had had the slightest idea of the change in her circumstances, and, although Marjorie and Alice had both remarked about something strange in Daisy's manner, both had attributed it to ill health.

And while no one asked any questions, Daisy was started now, and meant to go on with the whole story.

"You see, our family have been under tremendous expense lately," she explained, fingering the tatting on her handkerchief, and avoiding the girls' eyes. "My sister—she's only twenty—always was very excitable, and we sort of expected her to do something crazy. Well, she did! Last Easter she went to the seashore with another girl, but she didn't come back with her. Instead, she ran off and married a man she had known only three days!"

"My gracious!" cried Alice, who was now sitting on the edge of her chair, "How thrilling!"

"And did your father have to support him?" asked Florence, jumping to the natural conclusion.

Daisy shook her head sadly. How she wished their problem were as simple as that!

"No, he turned out to be a splendid young man—papa met him afterwards, though of course I never

saw him. Well, to get back to the story, Olive—that's my sister, you know—sent a telegram to say they were married, giving the man's name. But unfortunately it was Smith—a Thomas Smith!"

"Why unfortunately?" asked Alice. She could see no dishonor in marrying a man of that name.

"Because, as you'll see later, we had to trace her, and the name is too common. It was in April that we received this telegram; in May, Thomas Smith came to see the family alone. Olive had disappeared, and he didn't know where."

"But why did she run away?" asked Alice, incredulously. "Was he cruel to her?"

"No ; as I said before, papa said he was lovely. Of course, I was at school myself, and didn't meet him, but I'd trust papa's judgment any day. And he said he had never seen anybody look so sad. The poor young man seemed to take all the blame on himself."

"I wonder why!" exclaimed Doris, with pity.

"Well, it seems that he had teased her about a poorly cooked dinner, and it turned out that she was really very sick, with a fever. She took his teasing to heart, and ran out without any coat or hat. He naturally thought she would come right back, but she didn't. Then he began to phone to all her friends, and to us, but nobody has seen her since. We don't know whether she's dead or not!"

"How dreadful!" whispered several of the girls, sympathetically.

"And so, ever since then, papa and Mr. Smith have both spent a great deal of money in trying to trace her; but no detectives have ever found a clue. Mr. Smith finally became discouraged, and went away, giving her up as dead. But we have never given up hope."

"Surely she'll turn up," said Doris, consolingly. "Why, if she had died, somebody, somehow, would have sent word."

"Except that there was no way to identify her. Well, papa has another theory. He thinks her exposure while she was so sick made her temporarily lose her mind, and probably even now she is an amnesia victim, wandering around trying to find out who she is."

"Wouldn't it be great if we'd find her!" cried Alice, who was always looking for adventure.

"We'd never find her this far away," said Daisy, sadly. "If Olive's alive, she's somewhere in the East. Mr. Smith said she couldn't have had more than ten or fifteen dollars in her purse."

"Anyway, I'm going to watch for her all the time!" declared Alice. "I'd rather watch for her than for that old stick of a lieutenant!"

"Tell us what she looks like!" begged Marjorie.

"She's very striking looking. You coudn't miss

her. She has dark, wavy hair, and very pink cheeks. Her eyes are blue, and she has a dimple in her right cheek. She's medium height, and slender."

"Have you a picture of her?" asked Lily.

"I'm afraid I haven't," sighed Daisy. "I didn't bring any pictures at all with me. I thought we might live in tents, and wouldn't want anything that wasn't absolutely necessary."

"Well, let's look at every girl we see, every time the train slows down. And we can go in the diner in relays tomorrow, and look over everybody on the train!" said Alice.

"Now Alice, that's too foolish!" cried practical Florence Evans. "Imagine finding her right on this train! You sound like a dime novel!"

"But she must be somewhere!" persisted Alice, stubbornly.

This discussion was interrupted by Marjorie's asking Daisy what she was planning to do next year.

"I've been studying stenography," replied the girl, "and I have a position waiting for me at home in the principal's office of the public school. I'm very lucky, because that will allow me to be with mother, and help a little besides."

"I think you're wonderful to be so cheerful!" said Marjorie, admiringly. "And think of keeping it from us all this time!"

"Well, I always hoped the thing would solve it-

self, and that there would be no need of explanations. But now I'm getting pretty hopeless too."

"Whom do you bet we find first?" asked Alice, in spite of Florence's rebuke, "Daisy's sister, or the lieutenant?"

"Daisy's sister, I hope," replied Doris, with a yawn. "Come girls, let's go away and let these people go to bed!"

CHAPTER V.

THE TWO LIEUTENANTS.

NINE hundred miles of their journey were over. The Girl Scouts had reached Chicago.

It was a little after two o'clock in the afternoon, and the train was to lay over until five. With more eagerness than any of the other passengers displayed, the girls hurried out to make the most of their time.

"Let's go to a movie, and then have afternoon tea at a big hotel," suggested Lily, as soon as they were in the station. "I'd love to treat."

"No, thanks, Lil—that would really be too much," objected Alice. "Suppose we take one of those sight-seeing busses, and 'do the town.' I've never been in Chicago before. Besides, we'd see so many people, maybe we would run some chance of finding Olive."

"Yes, and run more risk of running into that awful lieutenant," said Lily, mischievously. She winked slyly at Marjorie, although of late the latter

had grown somewhat tired of the joke. As a new officer, she longed to wear her lieutenant's shield upon her coat, instead of keeping it hidden in the depths of her trunk.

"Now, Lily, you know that's nonsense!" protested Ethel. "If the old lieutenant is going to find us, she knows what train we're on, and all about us. We simply couldn't hide from her! No, let's take the bus—we can go to a movie anywhere. And maybe, if you really want to, there would be time to take us for tea afterward."

The girls all chimed in approvingly at Ethel's suggestions, and inquired for the nearest bus.

The experience of seeing a city in this ordinary way was a novel one for most of them. Perched high up in the air, amid a crowd of noisy people. they listened with great amusement to the remarks of their fellow passengers, and the cut-and-dried descriptions and ancient jokes of the guide. They hardly opened their mouths during the ride, and when they did volunteer an observation to one of their comrades, it was in a whisper. It required most of their efforts to keep themselves from laughing out loud.

They stopped at one of the big hotels near the station, and, as it was only four o'clock, they looked forward to a delightful hour in the tea-room. They

were entering the lobby when Alice suddenly grasped Daisy's arm.

"Look! look! Daisy! Could that be Olive?" she whispered, breathlessly. "See—over there—by the elevator!"

Daisy's eyes followed the direction indicated by her companion. The young woman was about her sister's age, and she had dark hair; but in no other way did she resemble Olive. The girl shook her head sadly.

"Well, I'm going to keep right on watching," said Alice, as the girls entered the dining-room. "There, let's ask the waiter to let us sit over there by the window—then we can see everybody who comes into the room."

When they were finally established at one of the larger tables to the side, Florence expressed herself frankly in regard to Alice's attitude.

"Alice," she said, "I think you're really silly for a grown-up girl. Daisy said herself that there isn't a chance that her sister could be out West, and yet you continually keep looking for her, and talking about her, till Daisy can never hope to get her mind away from the thing for a minute."

Alice flushed painfully at Florence's severe criticism. She was very sorry for Daisy, and was only trying to help her solve the mystery. It seemed

cruel of Florence to intimate that she was only making it harder for the girl.

Daisy, however, took a different view of the situation.

"Florence is mistaken, Alice," she said, kindly. "It doesn't make me feel badly to have you so interested; instead it gives me more hope. Before, when I never told anybody about it, I thought I'd go crazy—but now Alice's enthusiasm makes me feel as if Olive really must be alive, and maybe everything will come out all right in the end."

Alice flashed Daisy a grateful look; but before anything further could be said, the waiter appeared with their sandwiches and iced-drinks, and the girls gave all their attention to them.

"This lime-ade is wonderful, Lil," observed Doris, appreciatively, as she slowly sipped the dainty beverage. "Let's take as long as we can here—it's so delightfully cool."

On this hot July day it would have been hard to find any other spot in the city so pleasant. The big, airy dining-room, with all its windows wide open, was artificially cooled by electric-fans and a cool-air system. The pale green curtains and green shaded lamps, the glistening white linen, and the fresh flowers on each table heightened this effect. The girls thought of the stuffy train, and agreed with

Doris that it would be nice to stay here as long as possible.

"And yet the journey hasn't seemed a bit long, or tiresome," said Marjorie. "I've really enjoyed it a lot."

"Well, you see you and Alice are blessed with beaux," teased Mae. "Those Brooks youths certainly are devoted."

Marjorie and Alice both laughed.

"You better say Brooks *children,*" corrected Alice. "They do both wear long trousers, but I declare Walter's voice hasn't changed yet!"

"Well, they're better than the old bachelor who was talking to Ethel last night," said Marjorie. "I honestly pitied you, Ethel!"

"He wasn't so bad, though," said Ethel. "Did you know he and his sister—that middle-aged woman who travels with him—are actors? Well, he was telling me about some of his experiences and it really was quite interesting. Still, I wasn't sorry when you rescued me, Marj."

"Come, girls!" said Lily, consulting her watch. "I hate to break up the party, but we simply must go!"

The journey from Chicago to St. Paul was uneventful, but after they had passed through the latter, the girls began to notice real indications of the West. Now and then, at stations, they caught sight

of a broad-brimmed hat with a leather strap for a band; they saw many riders over the prairies, and innumerable cattle. And here, too the girls noticed a change in the air. Just as one becomes conscious of the damp, salt air of the seaside some miles before the ocean is even in view, so the pure, dry air of the mountains began to make itself felt. The sun was clear and bright, casting sharp black shadows from objects like those cast by electric lights.

The girls were so impressed with the vastness of the landscape that they often sat gazing out of the window for a long time without saying anything. The scarcity of trees, the rarity of houses, and the total absence of fences seemed strange; then the appearance of a small town, twenty or thirty miles from the last, would again attract their attention.

When they had finally reached Dakota, they had their first good view of the cowboys. Their large felt hats with the broad brims, their fancy "chaps," or overalls made of calves' skin or of hair, their boots with high heels, and big red handkerchiefs about their necks made them appear most picturesque. When Marjorie actually spied one with a fancy pistol with a carved ivory handle and gold mountings, she burst into laughter.

"Imagine being that vain!" she remarked to Walter Brooks. "I always said men were worse than women!"

"Well, maybe they are," laughed the young man, good-naturedly. He was thinking of something else, and willingly agreed to anything.

"Time for dinner!" called Alice, opening the door of the sitting-room compartment. "Come on, everybody!"

"Miss Wilkinson," asked Walter, "may I request a favor? Could I sit here to finish a letter while you girls eat? I can't find a private place, away from that infernal brother of mine, in the whole train!"

"Certainly!" laughed Marjorie. "But when you go out, pull the door to, and I'll take my key."

When they had reached the diner, Ethel reproved her slightly for her confidence.

"Of course I trust Walter," she said; "but he's awfully careless, and ten chances to one he'll get so absorbed in his puppy-love-letter that he'll forget all about the door. And almost anybody might get in."

"Oh, I guess not," said Marjorie, carelessly. "Anyway, I'll take a chance."

But when the girls all returned to their compartment, they found, to their amazement, that somebody not only had been there, but was still occupying the best chair in the room—somebody so totally unlike anyone they had ever seen that they felt as if they must be dreaming. An old woman, so powdered and rouged as to conceal her real age, dressed in an ill-fitting, long, black dress and gray bonnet, gazed

at them as they entered. Doris, who was the first to enter the room, immediately jumped to the conclusion that this was the new lieutenant. But Marjorie and Lily, who knew that this was not the case, were at their wits end for an explanation.

"How do you do!" said Doris, politely.

The woman eyed her critically, with a scowl on her face.

"You the Girl Scouts?" she asked, in a shrill, unpleasant voice. "I'm Miss Proctor, your new lieutenant."

The other girls had all pressed into the compartment, and stood with wide open eyes, listening with horror to the woman's announcement. Doris continued as spokesman for the party.

"Yes," she said, "Mrs. Remington wrote that we might expect you."

"Well, here I am! And look here—you're all going to walk the chalk-line! No more foolin' with boys, as long as I'm your boss! And no card-playing! To bed every night at nine o'clock!"

The girls heard these words with increasing anger; inwardly they all felt a rising hostility. It was Alice, however, who impulsively voiced the sentiment of the group.

"And you actually expect to go to the ranch with us?" she blurted out, in an insolent tone. "You!"

"Those are your captain's orders!" replied Miss Proctor.

"The captain has gone mad!" cried the girl, completely losing control of herself.

Marjorie and Lily, however, who knew that no such person as Miss Proctor existed, began to guess that someone was playing a practical joke on them. Marjorie decided to find out, if possible, while still keeping the other girls in the dark as to the real situation. So she struck upon a bold plan.

"Are you sure," she began sarcastically, "that you are old enough to be a lieutenant, Miss Proctor?"

The other scouts opened their mouths in speechless amazement at the audacity of such a speech from Marjorie Wilkinson. Could this be the same girl who was always so courteous and polite, especially with older people? But if they were surprised at the girl's question, they were dumbfounded at the old woman's reply.

"Don't get fresh!" she snapped, in a voice suspiciously youthful.

"And have you passed your examination?" continued Marjorie, calmly.

"Certainly I have! The captain gave it to me herself!"

"Can you do the semaphore alphabet?"

"Watch me!" cried the old lady, springing quick-

ly to her feet, and displaying for a second two very mannish shoes.

"A—B—C—" she began, waving her arms in illustration.

Marjorie held up her hand.

"I believe you—that will do," she said, suppressing a smile. Then, with a sly wink at Lily,

"Won't you shake hands with all the girls, Miss Proctor?" she suggested.

Doris advanced a trembling hand, but Alice put hers behind her stubbornly. She had no intention of accepting this freak, except under pressure.

"Oh, take off your glove, and give the scout handshake," commanded Marjorie.

As the woman complied with her request, both Marjorie and Lily noticed the large, boyish hand she put forth. But the other scouts were all too nervous or too angry to observe this.

"I'm not going to shake hands!" said Alice, firmly. "I'll get out of the scouts first!"

Marjorie looked dismayed; this was just what the joker, whoever she was, wanted. She sighed wearily; then a sudden idea came to her.

"Go ahead, Alice," she whispered, "we'll make her life pretty hot for her once we get her on the ranch. We'll make her change her attitude, and wish that she had never seen the members of Pansy

troop! One poor old lady hasn't much chance with eight scouts!"

Alice's face brightened at the suggestion, and she hastened to do as Marjorie wished.

"And now, Doris, will you get the flag out of my trunk, and we'll salute it with our new officer. But you must take your hat off, Miss Proctor."

Marjorie had been standing beside the stranger's chair, and with a sudden movement, she reached over for her hat, and, as if by accident, pulled off her wig. The short, black hair of a young man was visible underneath.

"Now, Walter Brooks!" she cried, triumphantly, "suppose you 'fess up!"

The boy, who had encountered difficulty all along in controlling his laughter, now let himself go, and burst into hysterical mirth. The girls, too, dropped into chairs, holding their sides, and wiping the tears from their eyes.

"I was trying so desperately to get away," he said, "before Miss Wilkinson was sure of her suspicion. But she was too quick for me!"

"What ever made you guess, Marj?" asked Alice. "I was too mad to think of anything like that."

"I guessed," replied Marjorie, slowly, "because Lily and I knew there was no real Miss Proctor, so somebody must be playing a joke on us."

"No real Miss Proctor?" repeated Ethel, in the

most relieved tone. "Then we have no awful lieutenant—"

"Yes, you have a lieutenant, and she's pretty awful," interrupted Marjorie, her eyes twinkling mysteriously.

"Who? Tell us quick, Marj!" demanded Alice.

"Well, she's just passed her eighteenth birthday," said Marjorie,—"and—and—oh, you tell them, Lil!"

Lily stepped forward, and proudly put her arm about her chum.

"The long and the short of it is, girls," she said, "that Marj is our new lieutenant!"

The gasps of happiness, together with the congratulations that followed this announcement removed any doubts which Marjorie might have entertained as to the approval of the other girls. Amid the confusion Walter Brooks made an effort to escape unnoticed. But Marjorie detained him.

"Not without your punishment!" she said. "Doris, lock the door! Now, tell us how you worked this clever little trick!"

The young man flushed, and looked helplessly from one girl to another. He made such a ridiculous picture in his long black dress, and his short hair, bereft of the wig, that the girls again broke into laughter.

"I know it was partly my fault," volunteered

Lily, coming to Walter's rescue. "I told him about the fake lieutenant."

"But where did you get the clothing?" demanded Alice, "No woman on this train would have a rig like that!"

"Yes, and the wig, and rouge, and—"

"Why, they belong to the actress, of course!" answered Walter. "And she was awfully nice about lending them to me!"

"Girls," said Marjorie, thoughtfully, "how do you suggest that we punish him?"

The scouts were silent for a moment; then the resourceful Alice hit upon a happy plan.

"Let him wear my Girl Scout uniform to dinner tonight!" she said. "And if he makes any resistance, I think we can round up his brother and one or two other boys on the train to use physical force!"

The girls shrieked with joy at the brilliancy of the penalty, but the young man winced at the idea.

"I'd rather go without dinner," he said.

"Oh, you'll go to the dining-room!" said Marjorie. "We'll see to that!"

"Please be merciful!" he pleaded. "That's such an awful punishment."

"But you seem to enjoy wearing women's clothing," said Alice, pleased with herself for thinking up the plan.

"It will be put through," said Marjorie, with a

finality that made Walter know that she meant what she said, "Alice, will you go get your uniform?"

And so, aided by three of the boys, the Girl Scouts made the poor youth go through with the punishment, much to his discomfort and embarrassment, but much to the others' amusement. He made the resolution, however, that never again in his life would he attempt to play a joke upon Girl Scouts.

"For they're sure to get the best of you," he remarked mournfully to his brother, after the affair was all over.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RANCH.

THE next day the girls packed their things and said goodbye to their fellow passengers. Walter Brooks still showed signs of resentment, but Marjorie insisted upon parting good friends.

When they left the train at the little town of Bailey, which was nearest to their ranch, they were surprised at seeing so few houses. But upon inquiry, the station-master told them that they would find more in the other end of the place, where the hotel was situated, and the yearly "stampede" held.

"What's a stampede?" asked Doris. "Doesn't it have something to do with run-away cattle?"

"Oh, yes, a real stampede," replied the man, laughing. "But out here we have a big time once a year with horse-races, and rough-riding, and all sorts of exciting things. We've had ours already—but maybe you'll get to see one somewhere else."

"I hope so," said Marjorie. "And by the way, have you seen anything of the people who are supposed to come to meet us?"

The station-master walked across the platform, and gazed up the hill. Two Ford cars were making their way towards them; and a minute or two later, stopped at the platform. Their drivers—two young men of about eighteen and twenty—both wore the broad-brimmed hats and bright colored shirts and handkerchiefs similar to those which the girls had noticed on the cowboys they had seen from the train windows. Daisy shrunk back at the sight of them, for they did seem a little wild to the Eastern girl, accustomed to the conventional dress of city men; but as soon as they spoke, she was reassured by their voices. They were soft and cultivated, and could not have belonged to an uncouth person.

"Are you the Girl Scouts?" asked the older of the two.

"Yes," replied Marjorie. "And we're all here!"

"Good! Pack yourselves in, then!"

The girls proceeded to do as they were told, four of them climbing into each car. They began almost immediately to ask questions.

"How big is the ranch?" inquired Ethel.

"In acres, you mean? Why—"

"No, I don't care about the number of acres—that means nothing to a girl. I mean how many buildings and how many people?"

"Oh, well, there is one big central cabin, and about

eight small living cabins. And there are twelve dudes there now—"

"Twelve *dudes?*" repeated Alice. "What in the world do dudes want to do on a ranch?"

Bob—as the young man had informed them his name was—laughed unrestrainedly. "Why, you're all dudes, or dudeens, on this ranch," he said, "unless your're horse-wranglers or cooks. Anybody who boards on a ranch is a dude."

The girls were relieved at the explanation; they had not particularly enjoyed the prospect of spending the summer with twelve dudes of the conventional type which one sees on the stage.

They were going up a steep incline, with a sharp embankment on one side, and several of the girls felt rather nervous. Marjorie noticed this, and thought it would be better to refrain from asking questions, so that the driver might devote all his attention to his task.

"Just see how barren the country seems," she said, "no trees at all. Doesn't it seem funny after being used to Pennsylvania and New York!"

"Yes, we couldn't find enough dry leaves to fill our bed-sacks if we were camping out all night," said Lily. "Remember how we used to do on the canoe trip?"

"And shall we ever sleep out all night?" asked Doris, as if she were not in love with the idea.

"Yes, if you want to go on the pack-trips," replied Bob, who had turned his car into a more level space now, and felt free to talk again.

"And if we want to go to Yellowstone, do we have to sleep out for a week or so at a time?" continued Doris.

"No, because they have regular camps and hotels there, and we don't bother to take our own equipment," he answered.

The road gradually became more level and less dangerous, and for a time Doris felt relieved. But just as they came within sight of the ranch, she was frightened by the sound of eight pistol shots, fired one right after the other. Several of the girls put their fingers in their ears, and all looked questioningly at their drivers.

"That's to announce your arrival," Bob explained; "and to send you greetings. There was a shot for each of you."

"I'm afraid I'd just as soon not be welcomed so boisterously," sighed Doris. "It certainly did startle me."

"You'll soon get used to it," replied the young man. "They're only blanks, and they fire them off all the time."

The girls now had a good view of the ranch, with the one big cabin in the center, as Bob had described, and the smaller ones a short distance away in some-

what of a semicircle. Beyond were the fields, in which they could catch glimpses of the horses, and of a few cows.

"Isn't it great!" exclaimed Ethel, rapturously.

"Yes; and it sort of reminds me of the training camp last year," said Marjorie.

Lily looked a little dubious.

"Doris," she whispered, "do you suppose they have bath-rooms, and hot water?"

Bob, who had overheard the question, laughingly answered it.

"You have all the modern conveniences," he said. "You'll find as nice showers as in any hotel in Denver!"

The girls got out of the machine and followed their guides to the main cabin. Mr. and Mrs. Hilton, the rancher and his wife, were waiting for them.

"Bob and Art found you all right, did they?" asked Mrs. Hilton, cordially. Her smile was so frank and her manner so engaging that the girls felt immediately at home.

"Yes, indeed; everything was fine!" replied Ethel.

The Hiltons showed them the buildings, assigning to them their two cabins. Each contained four cots—quarters for four girls.

"And now I'll leave you to get settled," said Mrs. Hilton. "Supper is at six o'clock, but if you are

ready early, come over to the cabin and meet the other people."

When she had withdrawn, the scouts began to discuss how they should divide. Since it did not seem to make any particular difference to any of them, they finally decided to draw lots. Marjorie, Lily, Daisy and Alice were to be together in one cabin; Ethel, Mae, Florence and Doris in the other.

Accustomed to doing things quickly after their long training at boarding school, they soon had their suit-cases unpacked, and their things in order. Lily, as usual, was the slowest in dressing, and long before she had finished, the others had all gathered in her cabin.

"I certainly am anxious to see the dudes, as Bob called them," said Ethel, seating herself on one end of a cot. "Do you suppose they are men and girls both?"

"I don't know, replied Marjorie. "Bob didn't say, did he?"

"No, he just said there were twelve of them," put in Alice.

"Girls," interrupted Daisy, who had not been listening to the conversation, "how often do you think there are mails here?"

"Not very often, I'm afraid," said Marjorie, wondering at the same time whether she might hope to hear from John Hadley soon. "But don't you worry,

Daisy, if there were any news you'd get it by wire."

"I suppose that's true," said the girl, thoughtfully. "And that reminds me, I wanted to ask you girls not to say anything about my sister out here. Of course I knew you wouldn't intentionally, but something might slip out—like it did about that fake lieutenant—if you weren't on your guard."

The girls laughed at the reference to the joke the boy had tried to play upon them, and assured Daisy that they would be very careful of her confidence.

It was half-past five when they finally strolled over to the porch of the big cabin. A large, roomy veranda, with plenty of benches and chairs, it looked most inviting and homelike. The girls approached it with a sensation of pleasure that almost seemed like adventure.

All the scouts had put on simple summer dresses, and yet as they saw the only other two girls of the ranch in riding breeches and flannel shirts, they experienced that uncomfortable feeling which comes to a woman when she realizes that she is not appropriately clothed. As they approached the porch Bob Hilton came out of the cabin to introduce them to the others. He did it clumsily, but so informally that they felt immediately at ease.

"That bunch in the corner playing fan-tan is the Grimes Academy bunch," he said, indicating five

boys ranging from thirteen to sixteen years of age. "And that's Pop Welsh, their keeper!"

The boys looked up and grinned, and the girls smiled back in return.

"Irene and Maud Judson," continued Bob, nodding in the direction of the two young ladies.

"Mike and Tom Melville, here"—he indicated two young men in their early twenties. "And that's all of us, except Kirk Smith, who happens to be taking a swim. And, of course, Art and me—; now you know where you stand."

"No we don't!" objected Alice, laughingly. "I don't remember a single name besides yours and the two young ladies."

"Well, you soon will. And we call each other by our first names entirely. So if you people had any idea of getting 'Miss,' you'll be left!"

"We hadn't—we wouldn't like it a bit!" Lily reassured them.

The girls declined an invitation to join in the games with the boys in the corner of the porch, and seated themselves near the two young women. They were attractive girls, of twenty and twenty-two, of the healthy, athletic type. Their clear complexions and bright eyes proclaimed them living exponents of this simple, out-door life.

"We're awfully glad to have some other girls,"

said Irene, the older of the two. "Although it has been fun to be the only ones, in a way, too."

"You'll love it here!" said Maud. "We wish we could stay the whole summer, but we've been here since the first of June, and we have to leave the beginning of August, to join our parents."

"If they could only come here!" sighed Irene. "I'd rather be here than anywhere else in the world!"

"That sounds good!" cried Marjorie, happily. She loved to be with people who were contented.

"Is horseback-riding really so wonderful?" asked Doris, who was still a little doubtful about the pleasures of a whole summer on the ranch. She had been eager to be with the girls once more during the vacation, but, had she been consulted, she would have chosen some more civilized resort.

"It isn't entirely the exercise!" laughed Maud. "Irene has other reasons for being so crazy about the place."

"Maud!" said her older sister, reprovingly.

"Oh, do tell us the rest!" cried Alice. "It isn't fair to stop in the middle of something interesting."

"There's really nothing to tell," said Irene, coldly.

Maud winked at Alice.

"I'll see you in private," she said, "though I won't tell any names, Irene!"

"Oh, go ahead—I don't care! It isn't serious, girls; it's only silly. But maybe the warning will

help some of you. I sort of lost my head about Kirk—he's terribly good-looking, you know—and he treated me like ice. Don't any of you show him that he makes the slightest impression on you!"

"I should say we won't!" cried Alice, with true loyality to another member of her own sex. "Oh, girls, let's don't pay any attention at all to him! I hate conceited men! Let's—"

"Sh! Alice! Do be careful!" warned Ethel. "You don't want the boys to hear you, do you?"

"No, of course not, but—"

"Why, here he comes!" interrupted Maud. "Now girls, don't seem impessed by his looks!"

"I'm not!" said Alice, stoutly, forcing herself to believe the truth of her assertion.

The man who came toward them was dressed in a gray riding suit, so conservative in color and cut, that it presented a decided contrast to the flashy costumes of the younger boys. He was tall, a perfect figure, with big square shoulders. His face would have been handsome had his expression been less disagreeable. Alice immediately marked him for a cynic.

When he had come within a few yards of the porch, however, he seemed to change his mind about going any further, for, hesitating only a moment, he abruptly turned about and retraced his steps to his cabin.

Bob Hilton, who was already standing in order to make him acquainted with the new arrivals, whistled softly, and dropped again into his seat.

"He evidently didn't like our looks!" remarked Alice.

"That's just the sort of queer, rude thing he is always doing," said Maud. "What Rene sees in him—"

"Oh, I guess I sort of like him just because of his indifference," returned the other girl. "Come, let's change the subject! I really think we had better give you girls some instructions about clothes. Those dainty dresses you have on are entirely too good for here. They wouldn't last two days!"

Like most girls, the scouts were all interested in the topic of dress, and discussed it with animation until the supper bell interrupted them.

It was not until everyone was seated in the dining-room that the young man who had been the cause of so much talk finally put in his appearance. He acknowledged the introduction to the girls with a brief bow, and took his place next to Mrs. Hilton.

"He *is* stunning!" whispered Marjorie to Ethel, as he took his seat.

"Yes, rather. But I like those Melville boys' looks, too."

Doris, who sat next to Bob Hilton, was already deep in a conversation; while the other scouts, who

were grouped together, talked among themselves. They were glad, however, when Mrs. Hilton told them that their places would be changed the following day.

"Tomorrow," she said, "we are going to draw lots for seats at the table, so that you girls can become acquainted with the rest of us. But tonight I thought I'd let you be together."

"Both plans suit beautifully," said Marjorie, well pleased with her surroundings.

"And what do you do in the evenings?" asked Daisy, as casually as she could, although in reality she was dreading the strangeness of this first night on the ranch.

"We usually sit on the porch as long as it's light," replied Irene. "Some of the boys go for a walk, and some of us play games. Of course, if it is cold we have a fire in the fire-place."

"What games do you play?" asked Lily, brightening. "Bridge?"

"Mike and Tom are the only ones who know how," replied Bob. "But they have both been dying for a game."

At these words the Melville boys became interested.

"Do you girls play?" asked Tom, with a broad smile. "That will be great!"

"Some of us do," replied Lily. "I guess I'm the

craziest about it. It always bores Marj and Alice."

"I simply can't sit still that long," laughed Alice. "And I talk so much it makes everybody furious."

"Well, nobody keeps quiet here!" remarked Bob. "And nobody intends to, either!" he added, emphatically.

"I say we have a game after supper!" urged Michael, who was as anxious as his brother to play.

"Delighted!" said Lily. "I'll see that we get another girl. Who volunteers?"

"Not I!" said Daisy; "I have to write home."

"And I'm such a poor player," sighed Doris. "I'd rather join in fan-tan."

"Well, I'd love to, if nobody else cares!" put in Mae.

The big porch was indeed a cheery looking place; even Daisy could hardly be homesick amid such a homelike, friendly crowd of people. Here and there groups were playing games; others were reading or writing; and some were just chating and joking together. Marjorie went inside to the book-shelves, and looked mechanically at the books; but in reality she was trying to decide whether or not to write to John Hadley. Suddenly she had missed him; she found herself wishing that he were one of the young men among that pleasant gathering. She was sorry for the careless way she had dismissed the whole matter of their vacation as a mutual affair, and for

the indifferent manner in which she had said good-bye. She would indeed regret the loss of his friendship; there were no other young men among her acquaintanceship whom she so thoroughly admired.

"I'll let him wait a couple of weeks anyhow," she thought. "It will do him good to wait a while. I might as well read tonight." So she selected a book and returned to the porch.

But she found she could not read long; in a few minutes Bob was at her side.

"All ready for tomorrow's ride, Lieutenant?" he asked, giving her a mock salute.

Marjorie looked up laughingly.

"How did you know?" she asked.

"Doris told me."

"Well, I certainly am ready—I can hardly wait! When do you go?"

"I don't go at all; I have to work at home. I get up early and bring in the horses—"

"Oh, that must be heaps of fun! I love to ride early in the morning!"

"All right, you can come along and help. The more the merrier!"

"Good! What time?"

"Six sharp!"

"I'll be there!" returned Marjorie.

CHAPTER VII.

MARJORIE'S RIVAL.

Although John Hadley had resolutely put his own feelings aside, and outwardly was as light-hearted as the rest on the week-end party, he felt far from cheerful. It was not that he was foolish enough to resent Marjorie's change of plans, for after all that had been accidental on her part. He and she had planned nothing definite, and it was only natural that her father should have the final decision. The latter had not even known of their little vacation project; probably if he had, he would hardly have considered it of sufficient consequence to change his larger plans for his daughter's entire summer.

But John felt wretched because Marjorie had not displayed the slightest regret at giving up their vacation. The prospect, which had filled all his dreams for the past month, meant nothing to her; she could relinquish it as easily as she might cancel one theatre engagement for another. John came suddenly face

to face with the fact that Marjorie did not care in the least for him in the way in which he cared for her.

He went over some of his past experiences with her, recalling bitterly the fact that her pleasure had not been because of his presence, but rather for some more practical reason. She had seemed to enjoy the dance at Princeton two years ago; but her joy was nothing in comparison with that which she displayed when she found her friend, Frieda Hammer. Then, too, at camp the preceding summer, she was wild with delight at his visit; but was it not more because of the present—the wireless—which he had taken to her, than for himself?

John knew that Marjorie had invited Griffith Hunter to the senior dance. Griffith Hunter, a college man of wealth and position, with everything that a young girl might wish to find in her future husband! What a contrast to himself!

He was working in Philadelphia now, and spending the week-ends with his mother at Cape May. She was not well enough to be in the hot city during the summer, so he had obtained a comfortable little cottage where she could keep house and entertain her old friends modestly.

After the week-end at Atlantic City with the Wilkinsons, the days seemed interminable to John. Each evening he would walk home from work, through

an open square, to his cheap boarding house; for he was living very frugally this summer, in order that his mother might have every comfort she needed. It was July now, and the evenings were hot and stifling; rejected figures sprawled on the square benches, fanning themselves with newspapers, and mopping their brows now and again with their handkerchiefs. Only the children seemed to possess any energy. A great longing seized the young man for the rest and coolness of the seashore. He was thankful it was Thursday; he would have only one more day to wait.

Cheered by this prospect, he hastened his steps to his house. When he reached the hall-way, he looked eagerly for mail. Yes, there was a letter for him—but not from Marjorie! It was in his mother's handwriting.

Once in his own room, he sat down on his bed to read it. But he did not find the news pleasing; his mother was asking him not to come down over the week-end!

"I am taking care of a sick girl, whom I found one day on the beach, and have given her your room," she wrote. "She has been delirious, and is very nervous now, so that I think it would be better for her not to see anyone this week.

"She seems to be a lovely girl—I like her im-

mensely. She is eager to go to work immediately, but I want her to get well first.

"So I should rather you did not come down until next week, much as I should like to see you—"

John felt a wild surge of disappointment rush over him. What business had this stranger to come in and take his place—keeping him in the hot city, away from his mother! Then he laughed at himself—why he was as jealous as a school girl! How absurd it was to resent his mother's helping a sick, friendless girl! He began to be glad to be able to do his part, to help her by sacrificing his own week-end.

But the time dragged on heavily, and he longed for his mother's next letter which would tell him whether or not he might pay his accustomed visit on Friday. It was not until Thursday night that he finally received it.

"Miss Snyder is better now," she wrote, "and I think it will be all right for you to come. She has insisted upon moving out of your room and taking the little attic one. She says she is going to find work next week.

"She is a nice little girl, and I am sure you will like her. But be very careful not to remind her of her trouble. She has lost someone very dear—but I do not know whether it is a parent, or a fiancé, or some very dear friend. But she almost goes into

hysterics whenever I start to ask questions, so that I have resolved to say nothing. Perhaps she will tell us some time."

John felt himself growing strangely interested in this mysterious girl. And, having resolutely decided to put Marjorie Wilkinson so far as possible from his thoughts, he did all in his power to encourage this new fancy. It had been a long time since he had felt an attraction for any other girl but Marjorie; the sensation therefore was novel.

Spurred on by this emotion, he displayed more eagerness than usual in leaving his desk promptly on Friday afternoon to take the train to Cape May. He tried to attribute his excitement to the desire for fresh air and rest, after a week in the hot city, but he knew that this was not all. For when his mother, alone, met the train, he experienced a decided feeling of disappointment.

"How's Miss Snyder?" he asked, as soon as he had satisfied himself as to his mother's health.

"Much better, thank you. She's gone to bed early, so you won't see her tonight. She needs all her strength."

Another disappointment! John managed to conceal his feelings.

"She—she doesn't mind my coming?" he faltered.

"Not a bit. She hardly listened when I told her."

This piece of information was not particularly

pleasant to a young man who was hoping to forget his infatuation for one girl by becoming interested in a new one. Suppose she were as indifferent as Marjorie!

"What's she like?" asked John.

"Quite pretty—and of rather a refined type, I should say. She comes of a cultured family, for she has a charming voice, and lovely manners."

"Does she seem to have recovered from her illness?"

"Yes, except that she is very pale, and awfully nervous. But I think she will soon come around all right."

"And how old a girl do you think she is?"

"I hardly know. Let's see—Marjorie Wilkinson is eighteen, isn't she?"

John flushed at the mention of the girl's name, and nodded assent.

"Well, Miss Snyder must be two or three years older," continued Mrs. Hadley; "although you can't tell, because her illness has pulled her down so."

John was afraid to ask any more questions, lest his mother might think his interest too pointed, and decided to restrain his curiosity until the following day.

"Have you heard anything from Marjorie?" asked Mrs. Hadley, when they were inside the attractive little cottage.

"Not a word!" replied her son.

"Have you written?"

"No—not lately. I didn't think it was worth while. Marjorie's having too good a time to care for letters from me."

"That's just where you're mistaken, John," said Mrs. Hadley, kindly. "If I were you I'd write. Girls love to get letters when they are far away from home."

"But Marjorie has always seemed rather indifferent. I guess it's because she's so sure of me. If I could only make her jealous by being interested in some other girl! But it just seems as if I can't!"

"Well, you have plenty of time, John, so I wouldn't worry if I were you," answered his mother, consolingly. "But I would write to her once in a while."

Early the next morning John was up, anxious not to lose any more of his visit than necessary in sleep. He could sleep in the city, where he had nothing else to do in the evenings; but here he wanted to enjoy the fresh air as much as possible.

He was surprised to find his mother's guest in the dining-room when he came down stairs. She was setting the table, and, as she bent over the blue and white breakfast dishes, she made a pretty picture. She smiled slightly when Mrs. Hadley presented her son.

"And now I think breakfast is ready," she said. "Dorothy, you and John sit down, and I'll bring the things in."

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" objected John "I'll bring them in, myself! It will be great sport to be waiter. What comes first?"

"Cantaloupes," replied Mrs. Hadley, obediently submitting to his orders.

Although John did his best to be lively and entertaining during the meal, he found his efforts falling strangely flat. Miss Snyder seemed unconscious of his conversation, and only came out of her reverie when he addressed to her a direct question. Finally he gave it up, and talked entirely to his mother.

"Are you young people going in bathing?" asked Mrs. Hadley, at the conclusion of the meal.

"No, I'm not," replied the girl, without raising her eyes from her plate. "I'm going to look for a job."

"Oh, wait till Monday!" urged Mrs. Hadley. "Why don't you and John amuse each other today?"

Miss Snyder shook her head decidedly.

"No," she said, "I bought the paper, and I want to answer some ads in person."

John saw that she had no intention of including him in any of her plans, so he decided to go his own way, just as if she were not present. He would

look up some of the fellows and join their bathing party, and in the afternoon he would take his mother to the beach.

When he and his mother returned from their walk late in the afternoon, they found Miss Snyder in high good spirits. Her eyes were sparkling, and there was some color in her formerly pale cheeks. She had obtained a position.

She told them all she knew about it at supper.

"It's only selling embroidery in a fancy-work shop on the boardwalk," she explained; "but during my spare time I am to embroider, and I get paid extra for my work. I'm really awfully lucky!"

"I think they're lucky!" cried John, with sincere admiration. The girl looked capable.

"No, I am, because you see I have never worked before, and I couldn't give any references."

John was quiet for a moment; he was trying to imagine what her life had been. Evidently she came of a well-to-do family; as Mrs. Hadley had said, she was not an ordinary girl. If she had been, he knew his mother would have made some effort to help her, but she would not have brought her into her own home.

"But surely you could give some personal friends as references?" suggested John.

"No, I couldn't!"

"Heavens! You sound as if you had been serv-

ing a term in prison!" He laughed as he said this; the remark sounded too absurd. But to his amazement, the girl's eyes filled with tears.

"No! No! Not that!" she protested, and John took the warning, realizing that his remark had been tactless.

"I say," said the young man hastily, "let's celebrate by going to a show tonight! What do you say?" He looked eagerly at Dorothy.

"If—if your mother wants to," said the girl, shyly.

"Yes, all right," said Mrs. Hadley; "but I am tired. John and I had quite a long walk this afternoon. Why don't you young people go alone?"

"No, I won't go without you, Mrs. Hadley," replied Dorothy, quietly.

"All right then, I'll go," consented the older woman. "Where do you want to go?"

"Wherever there's dancing afterward," said John. "At least, if Miss Snyder cares to dance."

"I love it!" cried Dorothy, with more genuine, youthful animation than she had heretofore expressed over anything.

Saturday night is, of course, the biggest night at any of the seashore resorts, and as it was well on to the height of the season, all the walks were so crowded that they could hardly go three abreast; sometimes John would find himself alone, and at other times he would be with one of the women.

Unconsciously he pressed Dorothy's arm whenever they were in the thickest part of the crowd; it seemed as if she were a girl so greatly in need of protection.

The evening passed pleasantly, although the girl talked little, and when they began to dance, John felt scarcely better acquainted with her than when he first met her. But as the dancing progressed, her cheeks flushed with the exercise and her eyes became bright and happy; she looked as if she were having a good time.

Already John was congratulating himself upon his growing interest in the girl. Suppose Marjorie could see him now! What would she think?

The thought was just passing through his mind, when he looked around and caught sight of a familiar face. He looked again—was it possible that he had been right the first time? Yes, for the other had recognized him; a second later Jack Wilkinson nodded pleasantly.

"One of your friends?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes," answered John, slowly. "Yes, indeed."

"Do you want to look for him after this dance?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said the young man, wearily. Somehow, he seemed to have lost interest in everything.

At the conclusion of the dance, the young men found each other, and the girls were introduced.

Jack explained that he had simply run over from Atlantic City for the evening, and that even now he must hurry back.

"Well, I'm glad to see you're not grieving much!" he added, as he left them. He winked significantly at John.

John flushed, and turned away, suggesting to Dorothy that they find his mother and start for home. For now, whether he liked it or not, Marjorie would hear about Dorothy Snyder.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STAMPEDE.

MARJORIE and Ethel were awake the next morning long before the other scouts opened their eyes. Dressing cautiously in their riding breeches and flannel shirts, they hurried out to meet the Hilton boys at the appointed place.

"I have a horse for each of you," said Bob, "as you see. But if you don't like them, you don't need to keep them. There are certainly plenty of horses."

"I think they are fine!" remarked Ethel, stepping up to stroke them. "Come, let's mount them, Marj!"

"My, what long stirrups!" said Marjorie, as she got up on her horse.

"Yes, they all ride that way out here," said Bob. "It's more comfortable than the English fashion—if you are riding a long distance."

"Oh, we'll have to learn to ride all over again, I guess," said Marjorie. "But please be sure to tell us any little pointers you can. We want to ride like Westerners, don't we, Ethel?"

"Indeed we do!" agreed the other girl.

"Well, I think you both ride remarkably well," said Bob, who had been watching them with admiration. "There are a lot of Eastern girls who come out here who hardly have an idea how to sit on a horse."

The day was clear and beautiful, and the girls breathed in the pure, dry air with a feeling of exhilaration that they never experienced in the East. How good it was to be on a horse again, away from every care in the world! The blood tingled in their veins; it was joy just to be alive! Marjorie decided that she could not have given this up for a whole summer with John Hadley at a poky little seashore or mountain resort.

As they rode along, the girls kept their eyes alert to see everything. The elevation of the land, the clearness of the atmosphere, and the absence of trees made it possible for them to get a good view of the country for miles around. The vastness of it all impressed them, as nothing had ever done in the East.

"We'll ride out and encircle the farthest horse," explained Bob, "and gradually drive them towards the ranch."

"I should think you'd lose your horses all the time," remarked Ethel; "when there are no fences to keep them in. They might so easily wander to

another ranch, and get mixed up with the horses there."

"Yes, but all horses out here are branded," explained Arthur; "so if they do get lost, they usually are sent back. Of course we do have horse-thieves here, just the same as anywhere else."

"What I'd like to see," said Marjorie, after a few minutes of silence, "is some genuine horse-breaking. Just imagine making animals that have never been used to anything like that, learn to obey the reins!"

"That is an interesting sight," said Bob; "and you'll surely see some of it before you go home."

The girls stayed out until after eight o'clock, enjoying the exercise and the novelty of the adventure exceedingly. If it had not been for their ever increasing hunger, they would willingly have kept on riding all morning.

When they entered the dining-room, they found the rest of the party already seated, most of them half through their meal. The girls stood upon no ceremony, but plunged immediately into the business of the moment.

"Did you have a good time?" asked Alice, enviously. She wished that she had had the moral courage to get up so early in the morning to go with them.

"Fine!" cried Marjorie, her eyes sparkling.

"But you haven't heard the news yet!" exclaimed Florence. "We're all going to a Stampede!"

"Where? When?" demanded both girls in the same breath.

"We drive over to Crider—a distance of about forty miles—this afternoon," said Mr. Hilton, "and get our rooms at the hotel. The Stampede begins there tomorrow, and lasts three days."

"Oh, how thrilling!" cried Marjorie. "I'm so glad we're going to see one."

"Is there anything on the program for this morning?" asked Florence, rising from the table.

"Yes, a ride for anybody who wants to go, and a swim afterwards."

Marjorie and Ethel, who felt a little stiff from their strenuous exercise that morning, decided to remain at home, although all the rest of the scouts wanted to go. Marjorie went into her cabin, and selected some scout literature which she had received from headquarters, to take over with her to the porch, where she would examine it at her leisure. Ethel followed her with some writing materials, and both girls spent their time quietly and profitably until the party returned.

"Come on now! Cut out the study!" cried Bob Hilton, riding right up to the porch. "Time for a swim!"

"Is the water deep?" asked Alice, whose horse was just behind his.

"No, it really isn't any wonderful swimming hole," replied the young man. "So don't get your hopes up too high."

"Well, just as long as it's nice and cool," said Florence. "This sun is getting pretty hot."

"Oh, it will cool you off, all right!" said Arthur, with a sly wink at his brother.

The girls found to their dismay that the water was much colder than they had expected. Doris and Alice jumped in and out again in a flash, but the others decided to brave it a little longer, and get warmed up by the exercise of swimming. All five of the Academy boys, the Hiltons, and the Melvilles were among the party; but Kirk Smith and the Judson girls were absent.

"I thought you said Kirk Smith liked swimming," remarked Marjorie to Bob Hilton, after she began to feel a little more comfortable. "Why isn't he in?"

"Oh, he goes in every day, but never with the crowd: He prefers his own company."

"Well, I'm sure nobody's grieving," replied the girl. "Come, let's start a game, Bob. We've got to do something to keep warm."

But none of the girls wanted to stay long, and in a few minutes they were all on their way back to their cabins.

"That's my first out-door bath this summer," announced Doris, "and my last!" She shivered, and drew her poncho about her shoulders. "I don't want to be as cold as that again!"

"Oh, you'll go in again!" laughed Bob. "We always force the girls to go in once in a while. If they refuse, we carry 'em in!"

"Oh, but you surely wouldn't be so cruel to me!" pleaded Doris, in a tone so serious that Bob burst out laughing.

"And often when you're riding, the horse has to go through pretty deep water," he added, in the effort to tease her still further. "Of course you can tuck your feet up under you, but still you have to get wet!"

"I see there is no help for me!" sighed the girl.

"By the way," asked Marjorie, "what time do we start this afternoon?"

"Right after dinner!" replied the young man.

The cars were ready at two o'clock, and the whole party got in. Marjorie was surprised to see that Kirk was going; she thought he would not care to accompany the crowd, since he was so exclusive. To her amazement, she saw him making for the car in which she and Lily and Daisy were already seated, with Bob Hilton at the wheel. But not caring for his society, she hastily called to Alice to come occupy the vacant seat.

The long ride was interesting, if it was dangerous. The cars wound around narrow roads, up steep, rocky inclines, and beside precipices which made the girls giddy to contemplate. No one talked much, for the drivers were completely absorbed in their tasks, and the rest of the party were too much thrilled with the scenery to think of ordinary conversation. It was six o'clock when they finally drove into Crider, and saw everywhere the big posters announcing the Stampede.

"This is quite a large place, isn't it?" observed Marjorie, surprised at the number of houses in the streets through which they passed.

"And those stores look rather prosperous," added Alice. "Perhaps we can come over here before we go home and buy some presents for our families."

They drove up to the hotel, and Mr. Hilton gathered the party about him for directions. He and most of the boys were to sleep in tents, but Mrs. Hilton and the girls, he decided, had better occupy rooms in the hotel.

"Leave your things as soon as possible," he said, "and come down to the dining-room. We don't want to miss any of the fun."

"What sort of fun?" asked Doris, apprehensively. But, as if for an answer, before Mr. Hilton had time to reply, three loud shots were heard.

"Oh, shooting and riding, and lots of excitement,"

replied the man, carelessly. "Now do hurry, girls. Be back inside of five minutes."

The girls ran off as he directed. They were to have two large rooms, each equipped with two double beds, and with a communicating door between.

"Well, some people may like it", said Doris, nervously, as she took off her hat and arranged her hair-net, "but I wouldn't want to live in the West!"

"Then you had better not fall in love with any man out here," admonished Mae.

"Yes," added Alice, "you must not allow yourself to be so crazy about Kirk, Doris. He—"

"I—crazy about *Kirk Smith!*" repeated Doris, in a puzzled tone. Then, catching sight of the gleam in Alice's eye, she joined in the general laughter at the absurdity of the idea.

"He is hopeless," said Lily. "Funny what Irene sees in him!"

"Yes, none of us feel much love for him," put in Florence.

"Girls, I don't think he's so awful," said Daisy. "At least, if you leave him alone. He's always been very courteous to me."

"Oh, you like everybody!" remarked Doris, putting her arm through Daisy's. "Come, girls, that's enough prinking. Let's go down before they fire off any more pistols."

But hardly were they seated at their tables with the rest of the party, when they received a greater surprise than before. Right through the hall doorway, and down the center aisle of the dining-room, a cowboy came riding on his horse, past their very table! And no sooner had he gone than another, and then a third, followed. Doris said that she never had time to draw her breath between.

"Oh!" she gasped, when there was quiet again, "are we to expect this at all our meals—just like we have orchestras in the East?"

"No, they probably won't do it again," replied Bob. "It would be tame the second time. But I must admit that you are getting a good initiation into our life."

Although the boys wanted to go out and see the town that night, the girls all felt it would be nicer to stay at the hotel. But they were warned that it would be no use to go to bed early; they might expect pistol shots any time until midnight. And when they did finally turn in, a little before twelve, they soon heard a cowboy ride about the lower floor, firing off blanks at each door.

All this, however, was tame when compared with the Stampede itself. None of the girls had ever seen a travelling Wild West show, so they had no conception of what was about to take place. The town of Crider had expended every effort to make the

event a memorable one; and among the many spectators, at least not one of the Girl Scouts was likely to forget what she saw that day. The streets were thronged with people and the scene of the festivities was already crowded when the girls arrived. Through the efforts of Mr. Hilton they were fortunate in securing places from which they could command a view of the entire arena; and each scout—even Doris—had the determined air of intending not to miss a thing. While waiting for the fun to begin, they watched with interest the ever-increasing crowd of spectators, a happy, care-free crowd, over which the spirit of holiday-making seemed to prevail.

The show started by all the participants riding about the big arena in a procession. They were mostly cowboys, ranchers, and cavalrymen of the United States Army; but there were also a number of real Indians who were there to take a special part in the performance. After they had all passed in review, heartily applauded by the spectators, they retired; and the especially prepared events took place, reviewing the early history and the making of the West. A group on horse-back and in covered wagons representing the early pioneers crossing the plains, appeared; and one of the many dangers which were frequently encountered on such journeys was graphically illustrated by an attack from Indians, hideously painted, who came suddenly upon them

uttering blood-curdling war-whoops, and who rode wildly in a circle firing upon the travellers. And just as the deadly circle was closing in, and the whites were getting the worst of the fight, the crisp notes of a bugle sounding "Charge" were heard in the distance, and a troop of United States cavalrymen dashed gallantly to the rescue and drove off the Redskins.

Among other scenes there was given also the life of Pony Express Rider, that courageous servant of the government who, before the days of trains, delivered the mails on horseback, riding at top speed from station to station, stopping only long enough to change to a fresh horse, his path beset by all kinds of dangers from Indians and outlaws.

Then there were all sorts of contests in riding, shooting, roping, and horse-racing, for which prizes were offered. With the prospect of so much riding before them, it was natural for the girls to display a greater interest in the feats of horsemanship which they witnessed, than in anything else. And they never would have believed such riding possible had they not seen it with their own eyes. The cavalrymen gave an exhibition of what is known as the monkey-drill, or trick riding, which, as one of the boys afterwards said, was better than a circus. They ran beside their horses, and, with a leap, mounted without touching the stirrups; dismounted, still hold-

ing to the rein with one hand, and the saddle with the other, vaulted clear over the horses to the other side, ran a short distance, and leaped to the saddle again. Clinging to the sides of their mounts, they even crawled beneath their necks while at a gallop, without ever touching the ground, and scrambled up the other side and into the saddle again. One thrilling feature was when the men stood upon their horses' backs; next upon two horses, with a foot upon each; then a third horse was placed between the two; and finally when another was added, and the rider galloped them around the arena four abreast, the spectators went wild with excitement, and thundered their applause.

At the end, after a wild steer was led forth, saddled, and ridden for the amusement of everybody, Marjorie had an opportunity to gratify her desire to see real bronco-busting, or the riding of horses which had never been broken. This was not done by the gradual method followed in breaking highly-bred animals; the broncos were simply roped, saddled and mounted. Of course, to make the contest more exciting, the most vicious horses procurable had been obtained; and many would not submit to being saddled until they were thrown and blindfolded. Then the animal, when he felt a man upon his back for the first time, used every ruse in his repertoire to throw him. The buck-jumpers, with

their heads between their fore-legs, their backs arched, sprung straight into the air and came down again with their legs as rigid as iron bars, striking the ground with such force that many of the riders—men who had practically lived in the saddle—were sometimes shot like rockets into the air, to land sprawling upon the ground. Even wilder than these were the "weavers," or horses which bucked with a peculiar writhing motion, the forelegs at an angle to one side and the hind-legs to the other side, and alternating them so quickly that unless the rider were properly relaxed above the hips, he was in danger of having his back-bone snapped by such quick, snake-like contortions. Only those of the spectators who had ridden could fully appreciate how difficult it was for the rider to keep his seat.

For some time Marjorie had been watching the business-like manner of a tall, black-haired young man with very long legs, who sat as limp as a rag in the saddle and appeared able to ride anything. Though hot, flushed, and covered with dust from his exertions, his boyish face looked familiar to the girl, and she turned to inquire about him of Mr. Hilton, who had also been watching him intently.

"You've picked the prize-winner this time, Marjorie," replied the man. "Of course you remember him; he is Jonnie Owens, a professional horse-

breaker who works on my ranch. 'Fly-paper Jonnie' the boys call him,"

"Oh, I've heard Bob speak of Flypaper, and I didn't know what he meant," laughed Marjorie. "But why the name?"

"Because he can stick on any cayuse that ever drew a breath," answered Mr. Hilton, proudly. "Never saw anything that boy couldn't ride; so I'm betting on him today."

And it certainly looked as though the rancher stood a good chance of winning his bet. Horses were conquered and riders were thrown until, by the process of elimination, there remained to fight it out between them Jonnie Owens and a vicious buckskin horse, with wicked, blood-shot eyes, who had thrown every man who attempted to ride him.

And fight they did! It was now a question of whether the horse or the man should be the winner of the contest. From the moment that the man touched the saddle, that horse reared, plunged, kicked, and bucked in every way he knew; and finding that nothing he could do would unseat the rider, he even tried rolling over upon him. But Jonnie leaped in time, and avoiding the flying hoofs, was in the saddle again the instant the horse regained his feet.

Meanwhile, the audience watched in breathless excitement, or else cheered madly, depending on the

way they were affected. Marjorie was among the breathless ones, expecting every moment to see the man thrown. Once, for a brief instant, it did look as though the horse had actually won; for the rider was seen to leave his back; but the next moment, with a gasp of amazement, the spectators were aware that the cinch had broken, and Jonnie was sailing through the air, still seated firmly in the saddle. Badly shaken, but undaunted, the man called for another saddle, and the fight was resumed. But, true to his nickname, Jonnie continued to stick like fly-paper in the saddle, until even the horse began to realize that here at last was a rider whom it was beyond his power to throw. Fagged, breathing hard, he came to a stand with wide-spread, trembling legs. While the crowd was cheering madly, "Fly-paper" put the spurs to him, and went tearing around the arena, the master.

"Oh!" sighed Marjorie; "I wish I could ride like that!"

"So say we all!" replied Lily.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PICNIC.

In spite of all the excitement, it was good to be home again. It was wonderful, thought Marjorie, and some of the others who went with her, to get up early in the morning and help bring the horses in; to have the free and easy companionship of these friendly people all day long; to go on beautiful rides, and see the mountains in all their glory; and, at the close of the day, to join in the games on the porch; or, later, to go for a stroll in the moonlight.

It was only when the mail came in that Marjorie and Daisy felt a tinge of unhappiness. Unconsciously, all the girls expected that in some way the mystery about Daisy's sister would be solved, and that the news of it would come by letter. Unless, as Alice kept reminding them, they, the Girl Scouts, should have a hand in unravelling it. If only they might, Marjorie felt that it would be the crowning good turn to the troop's history.

Marjorie felt disconcerted, too, that she had heard

nothing from John Hadley. No doubt it was her own fault; the young man had written courteously to her mother after the week-end at the seashore, and probably expected her to regard that as a letter to herself. She admitted that she missed him, but she could not make up her mind to write immediately.

When the first Sunday of the scouts' visit arrived, Mr. Hilton announced that there would be no riding; but instead the whole party would go in boats or canoes up the modest little stream not far from the ranch, and have dinner and supper out-doors.

"A canoe trip!" cried Marjorie, her mind turning immediately to the memories of the scouts' own canoe trip two years previous. "How wonderful!"

"Don't you wish you had *The Scout* here, Marj?" asked Lily, referring to the first prize that had been awarded to Pansy troop, and which had been won by Marjorie.

"Indeed I do!" replied the girl, heartily.

"But I'm sorry to have to tell you that it won't be a canoe trip for everybody," said Mr. Hilton. "Unfortunately we have only five small canoes, and the rest of the party will therefore have to go in row-boats."

"Is everybody going?" asked Bob.

"Naturally," replied Kirk, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"So you think you're everybody!" remarked Alice, turning to the young man.

"Kirk's right," explained Bob. "Everybody else always goes to everything, so if he decides to join the party, he knows everybody will be there. But I say, Art, it's pretty tough about 'the rest' going in row-boats. I bet I know who the rest are!"

"Oh, it's always punk to be the rancher's son," said Arthur, carelessly. "You just have to lose out on everything, whether it's a matter of canoes, or pies, or girls—"

"Thank you!" interrupted Ethel. "Suppose we cancel that date for a walk tonight!"

"Now Ethel!" pleaded Arthur. "My one stroke of luck—"

"Hush!" said Mr. Hilton. "We must begin to make arrangements for our party. There are twenty-three of us, and places for ten in the canoes. I'll put some marks on papers, and everybody except our family can draw to find out the name of their row-boat or canoe."

Everyone seemed pleased with this idea except Marjorie, Alice and Irene. Marjorie and Alice were each afraid that their lot might be cast with Kirk Smith, and Irene was afraid that hers would not. As luck had it, Marjorie drew the unpopular man.

Irene, on the other hand, was coupled with Clayton Jones, one of the Academy boys.

Marjorie frowned when the announcement was made, and Irene looked tremendously disappointed. But neither girl said anything; each started for her own cabin.

"Poor Marj!" sympathized Alice, as she took the girl's arm; "I'm glad I'm not in your boots!"

"It is hard luck," said Marjorie. "But then, somebody had to draw him. And I guess any of the girls would have been peeved."

"Don't forget Irene Judson!" said Alice. "She would probably have been tickled to death."

The idea brought Marjorie an inspiration: why should she not exchange places with Irene, if it could be managed, and if the girl were willing? She did not remember with whom the other girl was coupled, but she knew she would prefer anyone else on the ranch to Kirk.

Accordingly she watched for her opportunity, and slipped over to Irene's cabin. Luckily she found the girl alone, but in low spirits. She was sitting on her cot, looking most dejected, and making no attempt to dress. She raised her head as Marjorie entered, wondering resentfully what had brought her there. But before her visitor had a chance to state her errand, she gave vent to her own feelings.

"You certainly are lucky!" she exclaimed, petu-

lantly. "I don't think it's fair! But if you're mean enough to make a date with him to come home—"

Although she was amazed at the girl's words and manner, Marjorie was delighted to learn so quickly that Irene would probably fall in with her plans. She therefore hastened to put the proposition before her, choosing to ignore the remark she had made.

"I came over, Irene," she said, quietly, "to ask you whether you would be willing to change partners with me, if it could be managed. I don't know whom you are going with, but—"

"One of those Academy babies!" interrupted the other girl. "Clayton Jones! I don't suppose you'd exactly enjoy his company."

"I'd much prefer it to Kirk's," Marjorie assured her.

Irene sat up straight at these words, hardly able to believe that she had heard correctly. It seemed incredible to her that any normal girl could prefer the society of a boy like Clayton Jones to that of such a distinguished-looking young man.

"Do you really mean it?" she cried. "You will actually swap?"

"I'd love to. Now—as to the method. Suppose I go down to the stream early, and run off with Clayton. Then you'll simply have to go with Kirk because there won't be any other place!"

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Irene. She jumped up

impulsively. "Oh, Marj, how can you be so generous?"

"But it isn't generosity a bit! I'm just as well pleased as you are!"

"Well, I think it's perfect—it will change my whole day for me. Now—will you go and arrange it with Clayton?"

Marjorie turned about and hurried to where the boys were still standing. Drawing Clayton aside, she begged him to fall in with her plans.

"But I don't understand!" insisted the boy. "Girls always admire Kirk Smith!"

"Well, I don't!" said Marjorie, with conviction. "I can't stand him, and I'd love to get out of going with him. And Irene doesn't mind."

"But I bet Kirk will!" muttered the boy. "All right, I'm flattered. I'll be ready before ten."

And so Marjorie found the excursion more delightful than she had anticipated, with this pleasant companion. Clayton was a Boy Scout, and he had spent several of his summers camping. It was surprising the amount of knowledge he had of nature and her ways. They talked of many things, delighted to discover that they had so much in common.

For the first mile of their trip, Marjorie kept turning around every few minutes and looking back, fearful lest the party would catch her and punish

her—perhaps by a dipping—for running away from Kirk. But none of the canoes appeared, and she hoped that they had forgotten what partner she had drawn. And Kirk would never tell; he was probably too indifferent to notice the change of canoe-mates.

But Marjorie was mistaken in this supposition. No sooner had the Girl Scouts put in an appearance than Kirk began to ask everyone for Marjorie. Irene watched his disturbance with annoyance, but she said nothing. Instead, she began to look for Clayton.

"You're sure Marjorie isn't in her cabin?" Kirk asked Lily.

"No, she left quite early—it must have been nearly half an hour ago."

"Oh, I saw her!" cried Bob, suddenly. "I saw a canoe go off about twenty minutes ago, with a boy and a girl in it. Now that I think of it, it must have been Marjorie and Clayton!"

"The scamp!" exclaimed Kirk, with more animation than usual. "She evidently ran away from me."

"You can't blame her!" muttered Alice, to herself.

"No, I think there was something special Clayton wanted to show her about handling a canoe," said Lily, loyally coming to her chum's rescue. "I heard her talking to him last night."

Irene shot Lily a grateful look, for which the latter could see no reason. All the while she was edging up towards Kirk, in order to give him the opportunity to ask her to go with him. The others were getting into their boats; it would be too embarrassing if he did not ask her soon.

"Well, Irene," he said, to her immense relief, "we're both deserted, so we may as well patch it up together. What do you say?"

"Oh, thank you for coming to my rescue, Kirk," she replied, gratefully. "It's so much worse for a girl to be left in the lurch than for a man. But I'm afraid old ladies like me can't expect to hold young men like Clayton Jones."

"But you're no older than Marjorie!" protested Kirk.

"No, that's true," she admitted.

She stepped happily into the canoe, well pleased at the success of the plan, and at the good-humored attitude of her companion. She resolved to keep up his good spirits as long as possible. He seemed in a talkative mood.

"Tell me what you think of this Marjorie Wilkinson," he began.

Irene did not care to talk about other girls, but she felt she would have to satisfy him as best she could.

"Why, she seems lovely to me," she replied. "She

is a very athletic girl—lieutenant of the scout troop, and all that—and she doesn't appear to care much about men. Last night she told me she would rather go with any of the Academy boys than anybody else, because they knew so much about nature!" Irene studied Kirk's face, as she added her final remark: "I really think it was she who arranged to run away with Clayton. She seems to like him a lot!"

"She's not showing bad taste at that," remarked her companion. "I wouldn't be adverse to a little trip with the kid myself."

"Clayton, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Not Marjorie? Are you—are you so awfully sorry you missed her company?"

"Certainly not!" returned the young man, coolly. "She's nothing to me!"

Irene felt relieved, but she was sorry not to evoke some warmer expression of sentiment from her companion. She was sitting in the bow of the boat, so she could not see him without turning around, and she could not do that too often. So she hardly knew how to interpret his last remark, or to know how much he was in earnest.

She tried other subjects, but Kirk made his answers so monosyllabic that she finally abandoned all attempt at conversation, and gave herself up to the

enjoyment of the scenery, and of paddling. Kirk was an experienced canoeist, and in spite of the fact that they were going against the current, he made good headway. When they reached the picnic spot, they found Marjorie and Clayton already there. They were seated on the edge of the bank with their lines in the water. Two good sized fish lay on the ground beside them.

"Marj can fish!" cried Clayton, triumphantly. He seemed proud to exhibit her as his especial property.

"My brother taught me something about it, but I want to learn lots more," she explained.

Kirk threw himself upon the ground beside her, and watched her with amusement. He. who was so indifferent to girls himself, was not used to finding them indifferent to him.

"If you hadn't run away from me," he remarked "I'd have been glad to ask you to go fishing with me."

Marjorie shot him a withering glance. He certainly seemed pleased with himself!

"Clayton is perfectly willing to help me, and he says Pop Welsh, who knows more about fishing than anybody else on the ranch, will be glad to give me some instructions. So you see, Mr. Smith, I shall hardly need your services!"

The rest of the party arrived, and soon everyone was busy with their preparations for lunch. The

boys made a fire, while Mrs. Hilton, assisted by the girls, unpacked the food and spread it out on the ground.

It was not until they were seated, and the meal in progress, that the young people began to question Marjorie about her disappearance. Clayton laughed, and Marjorie dismissed the matter with a shrug of the shoulders. She had decided that in the presence of both Kirk and Irene she would be absolutely noncommital.

"And are you going back the same way?" asked Lily.

"If Mr. Hilton will give us the permission," replied Marjorie.

"But suppose I don't agree!" put in Kirk.

Irene cast Marjorie an imploring look; surely she would not say anything compromising.

"I'll do whatever the most people want," she answered, sweetly.

"Then I demand my rights!" said Kirk, and Marjorie nodded in silence.

That afternoon the whole party went fishing, and returned not only with enough for supper, but with a supply to take home for breakfast as well. Mrs. Hilton was more than pleased with the results.

As they gathered around the fire again for supper, Alice suddenly noticed that Marjorie was missing.

"And so is Clayton!" cried Kirk, jumping to his feet. "If they've made another escape—"

"Which they have!" announced Bob, from the bank of the stream. "One canoe is gone!"

"Then I'm going to follow them!" said Kirk, starting for the boats.

"Without your supper?" demanded Mrs. Hilton.

"Yes—may I have a piece of bread? But come, somebody must go with me, on account of the number of places in the boats. Daisy, would you—"

"Yes, indeed!" cried the girl, jumping up immediately. "Something might have happened to them, and we really ought to trace them before it gets dark."

Mrs. Hilton thrust some bread and dried fruit into their hands, and they were gone. The others turned their attention to supper.

"I do believe Kirk is crazy about Marjorie!" remarked Bob Hilton, when the canoe was out of sight.

"No, I think it's Daisy," said his mother. "Marjorie has just got the best of him, and he wants to conquer her."

"Well, anyway," concluded Tom Melville, "he takes more interest in those two girls than in anything or anybody since he's been out here. And, by George, I'm glad to see it!"

Irene said nothing; she was too disappointed to

think of anyone but herself. But she no longer blamed Marjorie, or felt any resentment against her; she only wished that she might adopt the same attitude toward men that the other girl maintained. It seemed to be so entirely successful.

When the party finally reached the ranch in the late dusk of the evening, they found Kirk and Clayton on the porch. But the girls, they said, had gone to bed.

"And did you catch Marjorie?" asked Alice, laughingly.

"No," replied Kirk. "It takes someone as clever as Clayton to catch her. Not that I really wanted to," he yawned, "but I did enjoy the chase."

These last words sent Irene to bed a happier girl.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCOUT MEETING.

THE days that followed were packed full of interesting activities. Long rides over the mountains, swimming, camp fires and restful evenings in the big cabin with the other members of the ranch family. The girls felt perfectly at home; even Daisy put aside her worries and entered into the full enjoyment like the rest.

After the day of the canoe picnic, Kirk Smith had not paid the slightest attention to Marjorie, or in fact to any of the girls, in spite of Irene Judson's repeated efforts to draw his interest to herself. He was quiet, almost sullen, again, and rarely spoke unless he was directly addressed. It seemed to be his greatest desire to be left alone.

None of the scouts, however, paid much attention to him, except now and then to wonder what sort of person he really was. Marjorie had so many other things to think about that she was glad that he had not continued to seek her company, as he had done for the canoe trip.

The arrival of the mail twice a week was always an occasion for excitement among the scouts, as well as among the other members of the party. Marjorie always was fortunate enough to receive two or three letters; but thus far she had heard nothing from John Hadley, and she had been away over two weeks now.

That afternoon's mail brought her two letters, one from Griffith Hunter, inviting her to a dance early in September, and the other from Mrs. Remington, asking all about the scouts. What had they done thus far? Did they wear their uniforms often? Had they kept to their regular meeting-night? What new merit-badges would they be eligible for when they came back?

Marjorie read these questions with an increasing sense of shame. How could she write to the captain and tell her that the scouts had done nothing, had not even had one meeting since their arrival? The only time they had attempted anything was the occasion on the train, when Walter Brooks had tried to play a joke on them. And what a farce that had been!

Thinking over it all, Marjorie was overcome with remorse when she realized that the troop had been more inactive during these two weeks since she had been lieutenant, than it had ever been before. She could not write this to Mrs. Remington; no, she

must plan and act immediately. So she decided to stay home from the ride that afternoon to prepare for a meeting. While the girls were dressing she told them of her intention.

"Please set aside Friday evening for scouts," she said, as she dived into the bottom of her trunk for her scout book. "And I want the whole evening, too."

"But what can we do with a whole evening?" asked Mae, who hated to sacrifice bridge, even for one time.

"I'm not sure—but something!" replied Marjorie. "I can tell you better after this afternoon. Two hours didn't used to seem too long for you!"

"Ah, but there was no Tom Melville then!" teased Alice.

"Marj," said Mae, "you ought to get a bad crush on some man. It would make you more human!"

"How about John Hadley?" suggested Doris.

"Oh, that's too much on his side," returned Mae. "Marj doesn't even take the trouble to answer his letters."

"I never get any to answer!" muttered Marjorie.

"Probably because you already owe him one," laughed Lily. "Well, Marj, we'll give up our game of bridge for once, since you insist!"

"Once!" repeated Marjorie. "We're going to

have a scout meeting every single week, and we're going to do some definite work—"

"I thought our good times couldn't last long!" sighed Alice. "But look out Marj, or you'll get to resemble that lieutenant Walter Brooks and Lily prepared for our benefit!"

Marjorie laughed good-naturedly.

"Girls, you know I won't force you to do anything you don't want to," she assured them. "But we must have our meeting tomorrow night—and then we'll put everything to a vote. Be sure to come at seven-thirty sharp—right here in our cabin."

"We'll all be there!" said Doris.

Although the girls pretended not to be enthuiastic about their meeting, there was not one of them who did not really want it. The Girl Scout troop had grown to be a part of their lives, and they dreaded the time when they would have to give it up. So, without a single exception, they all appeared on time the following evening.

Marjorie opened the meeting with the usual formality. Alice was elected secretary, and the business was conducted in an orderly manner.

"I have a number of plans to talk over this evening," said Marjorie, "and I want your opinions and suggestions.

"First of all, I would like our troop to do something for the ranch—something to make the people

realize that the Girl Scouts are a worth-while body. I wish it could be something permanent, so that everybody who comes here every year might benefit by it!"

Most of the girls approved the idea, but Ethel shook her head discouragingly.

"I'm sorry not to fall in with your plans," she said, "but I am afraid there isn't much that a group of girls can do around a ranch. Mr. Hilton and the help would probably resent it—and besides, we don't know enough about anything. I—really—I hate to say it, Marj,—but I'm afraid they would think it was presumptious."

Marjorie was too sensible to be hurt at Ethel's words; instead, she made an effort to see the proposition from the other angle.

"Yes, I agree with you, Ethel. I had thought we might dam the stream in the meadow for the cows, but, as you say, Mr. Hilton probably wouldn't want it done, or he would have done it before. He isn't the kind of man to let things slide. But don't you suppose there is something, girls, that we could do? Please think hard."

"I know what you mean, Marj," said Florence, after a moment's silence. "But why not do something for the other guests—?"

"Especially Kirk Smith!" interrupted Alice, laughingly. "Wouldn't he appreciate our attentions!"

"Alice!" said Marjorie, reprovingly. "Do let Flos finish. I think she has the right idea."

"Well," continued Florence, "I'm not sure that I have much of any idea. But I thought if we could buy a victrola, or a pool table, or fix the tennis court, or—"

"Yes! Yes!" exclaimed two or three of the girls. "That's the idea!"

"How about a radio!" suggested Marjorie, happily.

"Just the thing!" cried Ethel.

"But how could we ever install a radio way out here?" inquired Alice. "They would never send a man so far, and none of us could possibly do it correctly!"

"Maybe Marj could," suggested Lily. "Didn't you help Jack a lot with his?"

"Yes, but that was only a very small one," replied Marjorie. "No, I really don't know much about it. But don't you think there is somebody among all the boys and men on the ranch whom we might let into the secret, and who could help us?"

"Possibly," said Ethel. "We could sort of hint around till we found out."

They fell to discussing the amount they wanted to pay for the instrument, and the best place from which to order it. No one, however, seemed to know much about it except Marjorie; so Florence

finally put an end to the discussion by moving that their lieutenant be made chairman of a committee to look into the matter.

"Now, another thing that has occurred to me," said Marjorie. "I know there isn't much chance around the ranch to do the daily good-turn, but I wish you would all keep it in mind. That really isn't child's play, you know, but a principle we ought to practice all our lives. You know how seriously Mrs. Remington always regarded it—well, I think we should think just as much about it as if she were with us to remind us of it. And, along with this same idea is the troop good-turn. Wouldn't it be great if the whole patrol could do something like the sort of thing we did for Frieda Hammer? Of course I don't know what, but let's keep our eyes open."

"You mean the 'knights of old' idea,—helping people in distress, don't you, Marj?" asked Alice, a trifle teasingly.

Marjorie laughed and admitted that this, roughly, was her thought. Then, reaching for her scout handbook, she turned the pages until she found the place she had marked, and began to talk about actual scout work.

"You know Mrs. Remington expects us to have something definite to show her along this line when the summer is over, and we don't want to disappoint

her. So I have worked out two plans for this, and I want to hear what you think of them.

"First, do you suppose it would be possible for you six girls who haven't won the Golden Eaglet to prepare for the badges you still lack before you return in the Fall, so that you could pass the examinations then? Ethel and I could help you, and maybe some of the men on the ranch are specialists along certain lines."

"We'll be begging favors of Kirk Smith yet!" remarked Alice.

"You might do worse!" said Daisy, quietly.

"Well—we needn't beg anybody," replied Marjorie. "But if we asked them, I imagine some people, like Bob or Pop Welsh, would be only too tickled to help. But seriously, what do you think of it, girls?"

"I think the idea is splendid, Marjorie," said Florence. "Only last night I was deciding that we seniors ought to make it our object to become Golden Eaglet scouts before we graduate from Miss Allen's, and I told Alice about it. We intended to start in the Fall, when we got back. But this would be better yet."

Several other girls expressed their approbation of the plan, and Marjorie began to feel very happy. How pleasant it was to have the whole-hearted cooperation of the patrol, without any dissenting voice

of envy, such as Ruth Henry had always brought.

"Then, there's one more thing," she concluded, "according to our present expectations, all the scouts here except two will be out of Pansy troop and active scout membership in the Fall. Could we not, therefore, take some time every Friday evening to train ourselves a little bit for leadership, so that we can start new troops among younger girls, when we get back East? I wrote for some books, and really, I have the most wonderful instructions here from headquarters. They're simply fascinating! But I don't want to make anybody take the course who doesn't want to; so I thought we could have our scout meeting first, from seven to eight o'clock and then have the class afterward, for everyone who wants to stay. So—think it over!"

Naturally, the girls all felt anxious to do as Marjorie suggested, and all signed the enrollment paper to be returned to headquarters.

"Maybe Irene and Maud would like to take it too," suggested Alice.

"Not they!" returned Ethel. "They're too glad of a chance to get rid of us, so they can have the boys to themselves!"

Marjorie laughed; Ethel always saw through people, fearlessly pointing out their weaknesses. Still she was equally fair in crediting them with their virtues.

"Has anybody else anything to bring up?" asked Marjorie, consulting her watch.

"No, I move we adjourn!" said Lily, evidently in haste to get away.

"Why, Lil!" remarked Alice, looking at her suspiciously, "it certainly sounds as if you had a date!"

"I have!" replied the other mysteriously.

"Then I move we don't adjourn!" said Alice, maliciously. "It's only half-past eight—let's stay and study scout work!"

"There's a motion on the floor, Miss Endicott!" said Lily, haughtily. "Yours is not in order!"

"And for that matter," put in Marjorie, "Alice has a date too, only she doesn't know it."

"I have? What?"

"Well, Lily and I have a little surprise for you all. We wrote home for some food, and it came; so we've invited all the dudes to a party in the dining-room. Mr. and Mrs. Hilton are there already, and something tells me the rest of the people suspect something."

The scouts waited for no formal adjournment now, but one and all jumped up, embracing Marjorie and Lily as they passed in their rush for the dining-room. The news had travelled already, and the guests were there before their hostesses.

Mrs. Hilton had arranged the refreshments on the table while the scouts were at their meeting.

The prospect of eating those wonderful apples and oranges that formed such an attractive center-piece of tasting the daintiest bon-bons and chocolates, and having plenty of more substantial things like crackers and cheese and olives, seemed thrilling to these people to whom fresh fruit and candies were such rarities.

The young people grouped themselves about the table and began to pass the food. It seemed as if everything that could possibly be sent two-thirds of the way across the continent had been thought of and included. Figs, fruit-cake, nuts, pickles, olives, raisins, crackers of all kinds—so much that there would be no need for breakfast the following day.

"I hope," remarked Mrs. Hilton apprehensively, "that you girls didn't write home and say that you were being starved here, did you?"

"Oh no!" replied Marjorie, with assurance. "We just said we wanted a party."

"And you certainly got it!" laughed Mr. Hilton.

"Does anybody feel like dancing?" asked Bob, after almost everyone had finished eating.

"Yes — always!" answered Doris, without the slightest hesitation.

The party moved into the front room now, and soon everyone was stepping to the music the old talking-machine was playing. Marjorie looked about the room and saw that everybody was taking part

in the gaiety; even Kirk Smith, who was dancing with Daisy, seemed to be enjoying himself.

The party lasted until nearly eleven o'clock, when Lily suggested that they wind it up with the latest scout song. Gathering into a close circle, the eight girls put their heads together and sang:

"There are Girl Scouts in the cities,
There are Girl Scouts East and West;
But of all the scouts in khaki,
Hilton Ranch Scouts are *The Best!*"

Marjorie went to bed that night happy over the success of the troop meeting and the party that had followed. Her first official duties as lieutenant had been performed to her satisfaction.

CHAPTER XI.

DOROTHY'S ADVICE.

For days after John Hadley had seen Marjorie's brother at the dance, he could think of little else. Marjorie would have heard about it by now he reasoned, and he wondered what she would think.

It was not that he considered himself bound in any way to Marjorie; he certainly was not in a position to consider such a thing, even if the girl herself were willing; but he hated to have her hear through a third person that he had been spending an evening with another girl, after their little misunderstanding. She had always known that he was not the sort of man to go about much with a number of girls, for the simple reason that he hated to waste time with persons for whom he did not sincerely care. With the exception of Marjorie Wilkinson, he seldom paid any attention to the members of the opposite sex, in order that he might give all the more time to his work.

In the last year John Hadley had made rapid

progress. Entering the company as a "man of all jobs," he had steadily climbed his way up, until now, as an expert on radio outfits, he was often sent to inspect or install some of the larger, more expensive ones. The expansion of the plant, due to the increased demand for this new modern invention, had created a splendid opportunity for the ambitious young man to rise; and he had been one of the first among the company's employes to benefit by it.

Although he regretted the circumstances under which he had seen Jack Wilkinson, he did not regret the growing friendship between himself and Dorothy Snyder. When he visited his mother on the following week-end, and found the girl happily going about her work, she seemed more friendly than before, more like a normal human-being. There was something very appealing about her blue eyes, with the dark shadows under them, and her wistful way of keeping the conversation away from herself. Her voice, her manner, her very walk, proclaimed her well-bred; her gratitude to his mother was pleasant to see. John watched her as she moved about the house or sat in the living room with her fancy-work, so unobstrusive in her quiet way; and he wished that he might do something to help her, to take her out of her loneliness, just as his mother had helped her.

Dorothy would be busy all of Saturday afternoon

and evening; but John succeeded in engaging her time for himself on Sunday afternoon, and he went to bed pleased with the turn affairs had taken. If the girl did not actually like him, at least she did not dislike him, and the prospect of her companionship at the end of each week was something to look forward to.

Soon after dinner the next day the couple set out for the beach. The sky was a deep blue, and there was a delightful sea-breeze; the water was just rough enough to be pretty. The quiet of the Sunday afternoon, interrupted only by the monotonous breaking of the waves near the shore, seemed very restful to Dorothy. She sighed peacefully.

John had resolved, if possible, to make the girl talk about herself. It would not only be interesting, but it would serve to keep his own thoughts away from Marjorie. But he realized that he must be very tactful.

"And do you like your work, Miss Snyder?" he asked, casually.

"Yes—and no," she replied, thoughtfully. "I want to earn some money to pay my debts, but I shall be dreadfully sorry to leave your mother."

John started; he had not considered this possibility. He had taken it for granted that the girl would remain with his mother as long as she had the cottage.

"Leave mother?" he repeated. "But why should you?"

"Why, I don't know. I never thought of anything else."

"But you're such company for her!" objected the young man. "And you needn't be under any obligations to her—you can pay board, if you wish."

"Yes, of course. But she might need the room—"

"Nonsense!" interrupted John. "Nobody wants an attic room! Mother couldn't offer it to anybody her own age, and she never has young guests. And you probably couldn't get another so cheaply anywhere else."

"Yes, that's true. But do you suppose she wants me?"

"Of course she does! And so do I!" he added, with sincerity.

Dorothy gave a little gasp, and looked sideways at her companion. Then, dropping her eyes, she remarked, quietly,

"Then I can't stay."

"You can't stay—because we want you!" John repeated, in astonishment.

"No! I mustn't have young men friends. I'm—I'm not free!"

"You mean you're—engaged—or—married?"

"No, not that!" she cried, hastily. "I—I—" her

eyes filled with tears—"I can't explain, but I'm——well—I'm just not free, that's all!"

John feared a return of her nervousness, and hated himself for making her cry. He tried to be reassuring.

"My dear girl," he said, in an almost fatherly fashion, "for that matter, I'm not really free myself. I've cared for one girl ever since I was in high school, and I don't believe I'll ever care in that way for anybody else. She doesn't seem to think much of me; but that doesn't matter—my feelings won't change. So couldn't you just sort of adopt me as a big brother, and tell me your troubles when you want to? I promise not to bother you one bit!"

Dorothy looked up gratefully, and put her hand on John's arm. She was thankful to be away from the dangerous topic of herself, and glad of the chance to accept this friendship so frankly offered.

"Oh, I do thank you!" she said. "And it will mean so much to be able to go on living with your mother. But will you promise not to talk about my affairs to anybody? I'm just a girl your mother is helping!"

"Why, certainly," replied John. "Just as you wish." Nevertheless he was mystified by her desire to hide from the world.

They walked along silently for awhile; then John talked of indifferent things until Dorothy seemed

quite in control of herself again. At last she said,

"Can't you tell me more about this girl? I'm so interested."

"Why, yes, of course," replied the young man. "Only I'd rather not tell you her name."

"Naturally," agreed Dorothy.

It was an interesting subject to John, and he spoke glowingly of the girl's courage, her sincerity, her integrity. He told of her career as a Girl Scout, of the prizes and merit-badges she had won, of her distinction in being selected patrol leader of the troop which represented the United States scouts at the World Conference in Canada. Her record would not be complete, he thought, if he did not mention some of the difficulties and trials she had encountered during her boarding school life, and so he told Dorothy about Ruth Henry, and her mean actions against Marjorie; and as he related these incidents, he noticed that his companion listened with blazing eyes. Probably the story would do her good; in her interest in the other girl, she could forget her own troubles for a time.

"Why, she's wonderful!" she cried, admiringly, when John had finished. "And she's a Girl Scout officer now?"

"Yes, a Girl Scout lieutenant!" said John, proudly.

Dorothy seemed to be lost in thought.

"I used to know some Girl Scouts," she said,

more as if she were talking to herself than to her companion, "but I can't remember their names now. If they come to me, I'll tell them to you, so you can ask your friend, when you write, whether she knows them."

"But I never write to her," said John, softly.

"Why not?" asked Dorothy, in amazement.

"Well, she promised to spend part of her vacation at some resort with mother and me, and she suddenly changed her mind, left me out of the question, and went out on a ranch instead. But it wasn't just that—I didn't blame her a bit for liking that better—only she didn't take the trouble to explain, even after her plans were made. She simply waited for me to find out through somebody else—and then she practically laughed at my chagrin!"

"Oh, no!" protested Dorothy. "You misunderstood her! If she's the kind of girl you've been telling me about, she couldn't do that. She was waiting for a special opportunity to tell you all about it."

"I wonder!" mused John. "I wish I believed that. But she has never written!"

"Naturally—if you haven't! Girls don't write first."

John was silent for a moment; that aspect of the situation had never occurred to him.

"Perhaps you're right," he admitted, finally. "Do you think I ought to write, Dorothy?"

"I do!" replied the girl emphatically, so absorbed in her thought that she had not noticed his use of her first name.

"Then I will!" he said.

That night he wrote a friendly, but impersonal letter to Marjorie, ignoring their silence. But in spite of the fact that he knew Jack had told about the dance, he never mentioned Dorothy Snyder's name, or alluded to her in any way.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PACK TRIP.

BEFORE Marjorie had time to carry out her resolution to write to John Hadley, the mail came in, bringing her Jack's letter.

"And guess whom I met at a dance at Cape May?" he wrote. "John Hadley! With the prettiest little girl you ever saw! He didn't notice me at first, he seemed so absorbed in her.

"I kidded him about not grieving much, and you ought to have seen him blush. Just the same I'm glad he has pluck enough to find somebody else, for you don't always give him a square deal. Not only about the vacation, but your senior dance, and a lot of little things. It would serve you right if you lost him. You can play with a serious chap like him once too often!"

"Play with him!" repeated Marjorie, to herself. Did it seem to others that that was what she had been doing? She had never intended to do so. A sudden wave of loneliness spread over her; she felt

that if she lost John's regard, she would be deprived of one of her truest friends. She hoped Jack had attached more importance to the simple episode than it deserved; and yet John had stopped writing to her. Was he so much interested in this new girl that he had forgotten all about her?

If that were the case, she decided she would not think any more about him. She was having a wonderful time on the ranch, living this out-door life and learning to be a more accomplished horsewoman. What more could any girl want?

And so she abandoned her idea of writing to John and gave her whole-hearted attention to the life she was living. To her great joy, a pack trip had been planned for the following day, a pack trip that would last five whole days, and take them up into the mountains. At last the scouts were to have a taste of real Western out-door life; they would ride all day long, make camp in the afternoon, and sleep under the stars at night.

To most of the girls, who were at the age when every new experience brings delight, the prospect was thrilling. From the time when the trip was announced until the hour of starting, they talked of little else.

"We aren't allowed to take very much along with us, are we?" asked Alice, when the girls were col-

lecting their necessary articles and wrapping them in their blankets and ponchos.

"No, for the poor pack-horses have plenty to carry as it is," replied Marjorie. "Just think of the good time we are going to have, while they, poor things, have to do all the hard work!"

"I wonder how many pack-horses they will take," remarked Alice.

"There will be six, Bob said," answered Marjorie. "He is to be horse-wrangler, and Mr. Hilton and Art are going to help with the packing and putting up tents."

"The Academy boys aren't going, are they?" said Mae.

"No," replied Marjorie again, for she had taken pains to find out all about the trip. "They want to save money, and they have been on some of the trips before we arrived. And the Judson girls aren't going either."

"Well, one thing good, we're going to sleep in tents," said Mae. "I made sure of that before I consented to go."

"But we may freeze to death at night!" remarked Doris, who was the least enthusiastic of the scouts over the trip. "And suppose we are attacked by wild animals!"

"Oh, no one worries about that!" laughed Mar-

jorie. "The men would take care of them, and it would only make a little excitement."

"I'm afraid I don't care about that kind of excitement," said Doris.

Marjorie put her arm around the timid girl; she honestly felt sorry for her, for she knew that she could not overcome her fears.

"Doris, don't you worry—Bob Hilton will take care of you. He's used to the mountains, and sleeping out, and wild animals, and everything like that. But if you really don't like the idea, why don't you stay home with the Judson girls, and Mrs. Hilton's sister? They'd probably be only too delighted to have more company."

"No," said Doris, resolutely, "I want to try it once, but if I don't like it, I won't ever go again. I'd never forgive myself if I found I really didn't mind it, and that I had missed all that wonderful scenery just because of my silly fears."

When the girls were ready, they went over to the cabin where the rest of the party was assembling on the porch. Besides the eight scouts and Mrs. Hilton, there were seven men—the three Hiltons, the two Melvilles, Kirk Smith, and a cook. It was what Mr. Hilton considered a large party for a pack trip.

The girls sat on the porch talking with the others while the horses were being loaded. The Judson

girls seemed bent upon telling them all the discouraging points about such a trip.

"I suppose that this is you girls first experience in sleeping out," remarked Maud, with a somewhat superior air. "I wonder how you'll like it."

Marjorie laughed, but she left it to Ethel to correct the girl's supposition.

"Not exactly!" replied Ethel. "Three summers ago we camped for two weeks, and two summers ago we took a canoe trip and slept out every night for ten days—in all sorts of weather. And we have had various shorter trips. Don't suppose that Girl Scouts—even Eastern Girl Scouts—are mere tenderfeet!"

"Indeed!" remarked Maud, evidently quite impressed.

"Then you're quite used to sleeping on the ground, with your clothing on?" pursued Irene.

"We're used to everything except the trousers!" laughed Marjorie. "And we're certainly getting used to them now."

A few minutes later the party were on their way. The weather was clear and warm, and the prospect for a fair week promising; the horses were fresh, and the riding smooth and easy. It was Mr. Hilton who first introduced a discordant note.

"I don't want to scare you," he said, "for there is really no danger if you follow in our tracks, but

we are going to pass over some mines in a few minutes. The riding won't be so easy for a while, but after that part of our journey is over, the rest is fine."

"Oh, we don't mind anything!" said Marjorie, cheerfully. "I think it's all wonderful. Walt Whitman sang the glories of the open road, but he only spoke about tramping. Following a trail on horseback seems infinitely more alluring to me."

"There's another point we have in common," remarked Kirk Smith, who had been riding behind Marjorie.

"Another?" repeated the girl, unaware that she had anything in common with this strange young man.

"Yes, you seem to share my desire in trying to avoid the members of the opposite sex."

Marjorie laughed.

"I don't try to avoid anybody," she said. "But I also don't run after anybody."

"A very good rule," observed the young man, approvingly.

They were going over the mines now, and saw a group of deserted cabins, inhabited only by pack-rats. Nearby were the mine shafts, and all about were pine trees, shutting out the light and making the place appear gloomy and forbidding. Involuntarily the girls shuddered.

"Marj," whispered Lily, thinking of the troop good turn the other had talked about at scout meeting, "do you think we ought to get off our horses and search those cabins to see whether there are any people in them in need of help? I once saw a movie where everybody in the house was dead except a tiny baby, and if some people hadn't happened in by chance, it would have died of starvation."

Marjorie saw that Lily was more than half in earnest, and she was too considerate to laugh at the suggestion. But she shook her head decidedly.

"No, Lil, I guess there's nothing in there. And we mustn't go anywhere that Mr. Hilton doesn't go, because it might cave in, and if we'd fall—"

"Oh, look at this cliff, Marj!" interrupted Lily.

Ahead of them was a steep, rocky ascent, so narrow that the horses scarcely had room to go along in single file. To the right was a sharp bank, with a deep ravine below. Involuntarily the scouts gasped at the danger; for if their horses should slip, there would be no chance for their lives. But no one said anything until the worst was past; then Doris heaved a sigh of relief.

"Is there anything worse than that?" asked Florence, a few minutes later.

"Not on this trip," replied Mr. Hilton. "But I will say that Girl Scouts are plucky!"

"They certainly are!" added Kirk, admiringly.

The rest of the ride was comparatively easy. At three o'clock the party came to a stop in a pleasant place where a few pine trees afforded a little protection. The men began to unpack, and to make a fire, while the cook prepared dinner. Everyone was hungry; except for some chocolate and crackers, the girls had not tasted food since breakfast.

Later in the day the whole party except Mr. Hilton and Arthur walked up to a higher level to see the sunset and the surrounding country. To the scouts, who were used to such entirely different scenery in the East, it was a magnificent spectacle. They could see for miles in almost every direction. The flowers too were wonderful, so bright and so beautiful, seeming to grow right up against the snow drifts.

Marjorie and Daisy stood together with linked arms. Both had the same thoughts—how vast the great heavens were, how great the mountains, and how small and insignificant each individual was. Both naturally thought of Olive, and wondered whether they would ever find her.

Mr. and Mrs. Hilton had decided that it would be best for the whole party to go to bed early that night; so soon after the girls returned to the camp, they began to make their preparations. They had a big climb before them on the morrow, and they would need all the rest they could get.

The fire, which had been replenished, was burning brightly, and the girls were glad to note that their tents were nearest to it, for already the air was growing cold. Marjorie was a little lame and sore from the riding, and she too was glad to go to bed. But if possible, she meant to get up early the next day, in time to do a little fishing before breakfast.

She fell asleep almost immediately in spite of her hard bed, and slept soundly all night. Awakening before five o'clock, she got up quietly, put on her boots, and hurried off to wash. In five minutes she had her line, and had started for the fishing hole.

Everything seemed strange and silent in the early morning; no one else was stirring, not even the cook. The sun, which was just appearing in all its glory over the distant mountain peaks, shone upon the snow and made it glisten like the tinsel on a Christmas tree. Marjorie watched the spectacle in speechless wonder.

After she had dropped her line into the water, she waited patiently for perhaps a quarter of an hour, but without any success. Suddenly she felt lonely. Why had she not asked Ethel or Alice to come with her? They were always anxious for adventure, and they would have loved the sunrise. The minutes dragged on, and she began to grow weary. Perhaps it would be best for her to give up her plan, if she could get back to the camp without

being seen, so long as she did not seem able to catch any fish. But, glancing at the sun, she decided it would be too late now to hope to avoid the cook, and of course he would tell of her failure.

So she decided to remain on the bank a little longer, and hope for better luck. She sat still for a long time, allowing her thoughts to wander in many directions. She thought of the scout troop, and her plans for the summer, of the radio, of John Hadley and their misunderstanding, and most of all of Daisy's sister.

Probably an hour had passed, when she was suddenly aroused by the sound of footsteps behind her. She looked up hopefully, but was only disappointed. It was the one person in camp whom she did not care to see: it was Kirk Smith!

"Good morning, Marjorie," said the young man, pleasantly. "Caught anything?"

"Not yet!" replied Marjorie, dully.

"May I join you?" he asked.

"If you care to," replied the girl, indifferently.

Kirk sat down and cast his line into the stream. It was only a minute later that he brought up a beautiful fish.

"How pretty!" cried Marjorie, with true admiration in her tone. He was subtly flattered, and in a little while succeeded in repeating his achievement.

"Please show me," said the girl, humbly, handing her line to him.

Kirk put down his line and placed a stone upon it to hold it in place, and, taking Marjorie's, examined the hook.

"I guess you've been dreaming, young lady; your hook is empty," he announced, laughing.

Baiting it for her from his own supply, he cast it in again, and handed the line back to her.

Kirk seemed in a talkative mood. He commenced a conversation on the art of angling, giving Marjorie brief pointers here and there, to which she listened with eager attention. So wrapt was she in the subject that she temporarily forgot all about her former dislike for the man.

Before very long, Marjorie was more successful, landing four big trout, one after another. Her eyes shone with happiness; she felt very grateful to Kirk.

They were picking up their fish when it suddenly occurred to Marjorie to ask whether her companion knew anything about radio.

"A little—and I'm tremendously interested in the subject," he replied.

"Well, if I'd tell you a secret," said Marjorie, "would you promise not to laugh at me, or tell anybody?"

"Certainly," replied the young man gravely.

Marjorie then proceeded to unfold the Girl

Scouts' plan in regard to providing one for the ranch. She wanted advice in buying it, and help in putting it up when it arrived.

"I know one young man who is employed by a firm that manufactures outfits," she said, "but I don't know the name of the firm, and I'd rather not write to him personally."

"Well, I will write to the best firm I know if you want me to," he said, "if you will tell me about what you want to spend."

Marjorie named the price.

"And you would help us?" she asked, eagerly.

"I'd be delighted!" replied the young man, and they strolled back to camp together.

CHAPTER XIII.

NIGHT FEARS.

When Marjorie and Kirk reached the camp again, they found the rest of the party already eating breakfast. Too hungry to wait for the wanderers, they had begun as soon as the cook announced that he was ready.

"See what we have!" cried Marjorie, gleefully, holding up her catch.

"Great!" commended Bob, thinking of the pleasant addition to his breakfast. The scouts, however, were too much surprised to see Marjorie and Kirk together to think much about the fish.

"When did you get up?" questioned Alice.

"Oh, pretty early!" replied Marjorie, seating herself upon the ground beside Lily, and helping herself to a biscuit.

"Why didn't you let some of us in on your fun?" demanded Ethel.

"Two's a company—three's a crowd!" teased Alice. "I should think you'd know that by this time, Ethel!"

Marjorie flushed angrily, but hid her embarrassment with a smile.

"I went by myself," she said, calmly. "And Kirk came down later, and happened to find me there. It was a good thing for us all, too, that he did, because I didn't catch a single fish till he came!"

"And what magic does he use?" asked Alice, sarcastically.

"Oh, Kirk and Pop Welsh are the best fishermen on the ranch!" put in Bob. "I know that from experience. It's handy to have people like them on a pack trip."

"Well," said Marjorie, returning to Ethel's previous question, "I certainly did want to waken somebody to go with me, but you all seemed to be sleeping so peacefully, I just didn't have the heart. So I went alone."

"And did you all sleep well last night?" asked Mrs. Hilton. "Was everybody warm enough?"

"Yes, indeed!" cried several of the girls promptly.

"And how soon are we off?" asked Marjorie. She was always anxious to be on the go.

"Just as soon as the tents are down," replied Bob, "and the horses packed. Probably in an hour or two."

"It seems to me it takes an awfully long time to put up the tents and take them down every day,"

remarked Ethel. "Why couldn't we do without them, when it is clear?"

"No, it's better to have them," said Mr. Hilton; "but you girls really might learn to take down your own. It would save us a lot of time."

"We will! We will!" cried several; and Kirk and Tom offered to give them instructions.

Doris and Mae were not, however, particularly ambitious. They were tired from the long ride of the preceding day, and their muscles were horribly stiff. Neither said anything, but neither made any move to help with the tents.

"What's the matter, Doris?" asked Marjorie. "All in?"

"Yes, my knees hurt so," she replied.

"Well, I'll take down your tent," offered Marjorie. Then, turning to Kirk, "I really don't think we need much instruction, because you see we've done it before, with tents very much like these. We didn't have any young men to help us on our canoe trip."

This little assistance to the men saved quite a considerable amount of time, and the whole party were on their way again almost an hour sooner than they had expected.

Everyone seemed quieter than they were on the day before; as they rode along they talked little, and did not sing at all. Perhaps this was because

the girls who were usually the merriest were the most tired. Lily, Mae, and Doris all began to wish in their hearts that they were back at the ranch.

Somehow Mr. Hilton sensed this feeling, and ordered that an early stop be made for dinner. After all, it was a pleasure trip, and there was no reason for undue hurry. Tomorrow, undoubtedly they would reach the goal of their journey.

"Just wait till we come to our stopping-place tomorrow!" he said, by way of cheering their spirits, as they were eating dinner. "It is one of the prettiest scenes around here—really almost as wonderful as the Park itself. It's way up on a mountain, where there is the most astonishing view. And the place itself looks like a carefully cared-for garden. There are acres of smooth, velvety grass, and tiny lakes and waterfalls. And the flowers! You never saw anything like their colors in the East! Here and there, too, you'll see pine trees, and sometimes beautiful herds of elk. It would be a perfect place to take photographs."

In spite of the vividness of the picture Mr. Hilton gave them. Doris sighed wearily. She wished that she might take a warm bath, sleep in a bed under a roof, and not have this eternal climb, climb, climb, while her knees ached so dreadfuly.

"Oh!" shrieked Alice, suddenly terrified. "What is the matter with Bob's horse? Do look at him!"

The horse was repeatedly jumping several feet into the air, waving his head about widly, and acting as if he had gone mad. The girls watched him in terror, but Bob laughed reassuringly.

"He only smells a bear!" be explained. "That's the way he always acts!"

This explanation, however, did not serve the desired purpose, for the girls were even more afraid of a bear than of a crazy horse. To quiet their fears, Mr. Hilton stood up and looked searchingly in the direction in which the horses were sniffing at the air. Several of the boys followed his example, but apparently there was no animal within sight.

"There's really no need to worry," said Bob. "He probably won't come around here."

"But suppose he does!" said Doris, who felt so nervous that she did not want to eat any more dinner. "What shall we do?"

"We'll shoot, of course," said Mr. Hilton, calmly. "Wouldn't it be thrilling to take a bear skin back with you?"

But Doris continued to shiver, unappeased by the man's confidence. She resolved to stick pretty close to camp that afternoon.

"And what is the program for this afternoon?" asked Kirk, as he lighted his pipe after dinner.

Swimming and washing for those who want to," answered Mr. Hilton. "We men will give the girls

first chance at the swimming hole; then after they are through, we will take ours. How does that suit everybody?"

"Fine!" exclaimed Marjorie, who had decided that morning to wash her extra things.

All the girls decided to take advantage of this opportunity, and even Doris found a great deal of pleasure in swimming about in the cool delightful water. It was early in the afternoon that they went in, and the sun was still hot, so that they found the exercise refreshing. Fortunately, the temperature was not so low as that of the stream on the ranch.

"I wonder if bears can swim!" remarked Doris, who could not get away from her fears. "If they can't, we could jump into the water if one of them attacked us."

"I don't know—I think they can," said Marjorie. "But I do wish you would stop worrying about it so much."

"Yes," said Alice, a little sharply, for she never could sympathize with a person of Doris's nature; "if you had some real worry like Daisy has, perhaps you'd have some reason to complain. But look how self-controlled she is!"

The words which sounded harsh were really just what Doris needed, for she had been thinking entirely too much about herself. Alice was right: Daisy Gravers was certainly a girl to be admired.

She bore her trouble bravely; she had never even mentioned it to anyone but Marjorie since that first day at the ranch.

"You are right, Alice," Doris admitted, accepting the rebuke meekly. "I guess I am a baby."

"Oh, I have no need to preach," replied Alice, repenting of her harshness. "But we all have to acknowledge that Daisy is a wonder. Even Kirk Smith treats her differently from the other girls."

The swim and the clean clothing had a refreshing effect upon all the girls; they returned to the camp in brighter spirits. Marjorie felt positively exhilarated.

Supper that night was perhaps the gayest meal of the trip; everyone seemed to have some joke to tell, or some story to add to the enjoyment of the occasion. It was not until long afterward when the whole party was sitting around the camp fire that Arthur Hilton introduced the first unlucky stroke. He could not resist the opportunity to tell a harrowing story of an attack by a bear.

The men listened with the keenest relish to this exciting adventure, but the girls began to edge up closer and closer to each other, breathing a sigh of relief when Arthur finished.

Mrs. Hilton, as usual, made the first move to go to bed. The girls were only too glad to follow her example.

Still impressed by Alice's rebuke of the afternoon, Doris had resolutely succeeded in keeping her fears to herself. Now she crept hastily into bed, pulling her blanket up tight about her, as if to shut out the darkness and the sounds of the night.

She was almost dropping to sleep, when her senses were suddenly aroused by a queer howl — the weirdest noise she had ever heard, she thought. She listened, terrified, too much afraid even to sit up in bed.

"Marjorie!" she called to her nearest tent-mate, "do you hear that howl?"

Marjorie sat up in bed. She had heard it, but had not thought much about it.

"Yes, I do," she replied. "But I don't know what it is. Listen again!"

They were perfectly still, and the sound was repeated. It was not like anything they had ever heard before.

"It's a bear!" wailed Doris. "I just know it is!"

"I don't honestly think so," replied Marjorie.

"Then what is it?"

"I don't know."

They were quiet for a few minutes, and the sound kept recurring.

"Marj!" whispered Doris, "I can't stand it! I'm going to call the men!"

"I wouldn't, Doris."

"I've got to—I'm so scared, I'd never live through the night."

Immediately she let out a piercing shriek.

"Mr. Hilton! Bob! . . . *Bears!*"

Instantly the men were awake, and had pulled on their boots, and seized their guns.

"Where? Where?" demanded Bob.

"We can't see them—only hear them!" answered Doris. "Listen!"

During the silence that followed, the weird howling could be heard again. Both Bob and Mr. Hilton burst out laughing.

"That isn't a bear! It's a coyote!" said Mr. Hilton. "And far off too. It won't hurt you!"

Doris breathed a sigh of relief.

"Are you sure?" she demanded.

"Positive."

"I'm awfully sorry I wakened you," she said, apologetically.

"Oh, that's all right," replied Mr. Hilton pleasantly. "Now go back to sleep."

One by one the girls' heads disappeared inside the tents, but not before their owners had addressed some laughing remark at Doris, teasing her for her fears. Nor could the girls go immediately to sleep again; for a long while tent-mates lay there whispering to each other, and from the suppressed giggles

that were heard from time to time, they were evidently enjoying the situation immensely.

After they had quieted down, an idea occurred to Mae.

"Doris!" she called. "Hello, Doris!"

"Well, what now?" demanded Doris.

"If you hear anything more, you just scream like that again, and you'll scare all the bears within fifty miles."

"I don't care!" responded Doris; "if there are bears around here, I won't stay."

This sally caused another chorus of giggles, and the chiding was resumed again until Marjorie put a sudden stop to it by calling sharply,

"That's enough, girls! It's mean to tease Doris so—especially when none of you are a bit braver than she is, but only less nervous. Now go to sleep!"

After this rebuke, all was quiet.

But although there was no more talking, not all of the girls went to sleep right away. Marjorie was right; they were not braver than Doris; and as they lay there thinking about her remark, wondering what they would do if a bear really did appear, they began to realize that they did not at all relish the possibility. In the end, the fatigues of the day and the good health of the girls asserted themselves, and they fell into a sound sleep.

It was sometime later that Marjorie awoke. She felt strangely wide-awake as she lay there staring about her in the gloom of her tent; it seemed as if she had not been asleep at all. The moon had risen; she could see that by the bar of pale light slanting across the ground from where the flaps of the tent were loosely joined. She could hear the stamping of the horses, hobbled over beyond the tents of the men. She wanted to get up, but she knew that she would surely waken her tent-mates if she moved about; so she resolutely forced herself to lie there, while her thoughts wandered from one thing to another—scouting, John Hadley, the strange disappearance of Daisy's sister—until she finally dozed off.

Suddenly she came wide-awake again, and found herself sitting upright on her bedsack. Then she knew that something had wakened her. Could it be overwrought nerves, she wondered? She was as bad as Doris, who now slumbered peacefully a few feet away from her. Surely, it could not be nerves, since she felt no fear.

The night air had become chilly, almost cold; and she pulled her blankets about her shoulders and prepared to listen and to wait for something to happen. But as she sat straining her ears for the slightest sound, she could hear nothing but the regular breathing of her companions. The silence was becoming

almost unbearable, and she was about to give up and lie down again, when she heard, just outside her tent, a strange sniffing noise such as her dog at home often made when he had something up his nose.

Bears! It was her first thought. For an instant she felt too terrified to move, even to breathe. But no; it could not be a bear; the thought flashed across her brain that the horses would smell it and be alarmed. What was it then? She waited for a repetition of the sound. When it came again it was accompanied by a scuffling noise that seemed to approach to the very canvas wall which separated her from the outside world. Now she was sure it was a bear—it was just the sort of noise a bear would make. Perhaps those horses had run away. The girl was now terrified indeed, and pressed both hands tightly against her mouth to prevent herself from crying out, expecting every moment to have the thing outside break through the wall of her tent and tramp over her.

But whatever it was, it had paused, and all was quiet again; except once or twice she heard a slight swishing sound against the canvas, as if a branch containing dead leaves had been brushed against it. Marjorie was determined not to utter a sound, though she was so frightened she could feel first hot and then cold chills passing over her body. There

came a muffled tramp of steps receding to a short distance away.

As she waited, trembling, and nothing more occurred, her courage slowly returned and her active brain commenced to plan. The danger, at least, was no longer imminent. Should she arouse the men? And how? The thing was still out there somewheres, she reflected; if she attempted to leave her tent she would call its attention to herself; if she cried for help, she would not only frighten the rest of the girls out of their wits, but would bring forth the men—perhaps unprepared—face to face with the unknown danger. She had read somewhere that bears, when cornered, were extremely ferocious. Perhaps she had better remain quiet; there was always the possibility that it would go away.

Then the thought occurred to her that she might safely raise the lower edge of the tent without being heard, and make observations. Rolling over, with her head to the ground, slowly she stretched forth a cold, shaking hand to the cover, fumbled with her fingers beneath the edge, and raised it sufficiently to look out. But she kept her eyes tightly closed for fear of what she was about to see.

When she opened them she thought she must have been dreaming. After the darkness of the tent, the world without appeared remarkably bright in the soft light of the moon. Glancing quickly about, Marjorie

beheld, to her utter amazement—not a bear, but a horse! It stood clearly outlined against the wall of Mr. Hilton's tent, about fifteen yards away and was apparently dozing; for it was motionless, with drooping head. Marjorie felt so provoked that she risked waking the other girls by putting her head outside her tent to utter a sharp hiss. The horse raised its head with a jerk, and with a loud snort trotted back to its companions.

Marjorie threw herself back upon her bed, and pulled the blankets over her. She was undecided whether to laugh or to cry. But she did neither. Now that she was relaxed she felt limp and worn out. She again told herself that she was worse than Doris; but she was glad that she had not aroused the men and alarmed the girls unnecessarily; that she had had sufficient courage to sit there quietly in spite of her fears. She resolved to say nothing about it, not because of the joking which would be sure to ensue at her expense, but for the sakes of the more timid of the girls; and she determined to go through with the rest of the journey even though she were the only girl to remain in the party.

"I decided last night to go back," announced Doris at breakfast. "At least if anybody will take me."

"Of course somebody will," said Marjorie sym-

pathetically. "And I shouldn't be surprised if some of the other girls wouldn't like to go, too."

"Yes, I'd be glad to," said Mae.

"And I, too," put in Lily.

"But you'll miss today's trip to that wonderful place!" cried Alice, in amazement. "How could you?"

"The ranch is good enough for me," said Doris.

The subject was discussed at greater length, and the plans made. The Melville boys agreed to conduct the girls across to a little town where they could hire a Ford to take them back to the ranch.

"I suppose you can go without a chaperone," said Mrs. Hilton, "because you will surely reach the ranch by afternoon. So I had better stay here."

"May Daisy and I ride a little piece with them?" asked Marjorie, who was not in the least tired or stiff. Somehow she dreaded a whole morning of inactivity; for the party had promised to wait there until after lunch for the boys to return.

They started early, the girls in high good spirits at the prospect of reaching the ranch without encountering the dangers of the steep descent of the trail they had just climbed. They all talked and laughed so much that Marjorie and Daisy wished they might accompany them to the place where they were to get the automobile; but Tom persuaded them that this would be foolish, that they would tire them-

selves so that they would not be fit for the afternoon's ride.

"You better turn back now," he said, consulting his watch; "but do be careful not to get lost."

"Oh, I'm sure we know the way," replied Marjorie. "We'll see you later."

Reluctantly, they said goodbye to the other girls, and turned their horses in the direction from which they had come. But they were quiet now, missing the gay chatter of their companions, and thinking how hard it would be to be separated from them during the next three days.

"Well, I'm glad we'll be back with the rest of the girls for lunch," said Marjorie.

Little did she think, as she said this, that they had taken the wrong trail, and if they continued in the direction for which they were headed, they would not a chance in the world of reaching their camp by noon.

But they rode on, blissfully ignorant of their plight.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEARCH.

THE morning passed uneventfully for those at camp. With seven of the party gone, the place seemed almost deserted. Alice and Ethel insisted upon working off their energy by taking a walk; but the rest were content to remain inactive, except for the slight assistance they rendered to the men in taking down their own tents.

"We ought to be able to start by one o'clock," remarked Mr. Hilton, consulting his watch. "At least, if we get lunch over at twelve, and Tom and Mike are back again."

Mrs. Hilton, too, looked at her watch, and a worried look came into her face as she did so.

"Do you realize that it's a quarter of twelve now, and Marjorie and Daisy aren't back yet?" she asked.

Her husband dispelled her fears with a reassuring suggestion.

"They've probably decided to go all the way, and share the boys' meal. There would be enough. We had better go right on with our own lunch."

"Yes, for we want to get started early," said Bob. "It's going to rain before night, I think, and it would be nice if we could reach the top of the mountain and get our tents up before it starts in."

"I'm afraid you're right," agreed his father, glancing at the sky.

They were counting on a long climb with a rather late supper that night, and for this reason, the cook had prepared an especially large meal for the middle of the day. Ethel, Alice and Florence sat down to it rather reluctantly, for they hated to think of Marjorie and Daisy missing it, and sharing only a frugal repast with the Melville boys.

They were just finishing their usual dessert of stewed fruit, when they heard welcome pistol shots in the distance. The wanderers were coming back, and there was plenty of good, substantial dinner left for them to make up for their slim rations. Alice jumped up joyfully, letting out a wild war whoop, and Arthur fired off a couple of blanks.

But as they rode into view, everyone's heart sank at the sight of them. The boys were alone!

"Where are the girls?" demanded Alice, frantically, as soon as they were within earshot.

"In the flivver," replied Tom, smiling. "And you never saw anybody so happy as they all were!"

"Did they all go back?" asked Mrs. Hilton, grasping at this possibility, "Even Marjorie and Daisy?"

"Marj and Daisy!" repeated Tom, in consternation. "Why, they left us hours ago!"

"You're teasing us!" cried Alice, with the vain hope that he might be. "Oh, please don't be mean. We're so worried!"

But the alarm in both boys' faces immediately assured her that she was wrong. Something had happened.

Kirk Smith was the first to propose action. Jumping to his feet, he announced that he was going immediately in search of the missing girls.

"There can be no thought of leaving this spot today," he said.

"So the rest of you might just as well unpack and put up your tents again. Mr. Hilton, have we provisions for an extra day?"

"Yes, plenty," replied the older man; "especially since three of the party have gone home."

"Well, then I'd like to take some food with me for the girls when I find them," continued Kirk. "And I want a companion. Who volunteers?"

"I do!" cried Bob, promptly. "If somebody will look after the horses for me while I'm gone."

"I will!" offered Arthur, who preferred staying with Ethel to going off on such a chase.

The young men lost no time in their preparations, and by two o'clock they were on their horses, following the trail which the party had taken in the

morning. They kept their eyes intently fixed on the ground, watching for horses' tracks. Luckily they both knew the mountains well; it was unlikely that they too might get lost.

Whenever they came to a precipice or a dangerous cliff, they forced themselves to look over, dreading lest they might see the lifeless forms of the girls—or the horses—below. Every fifteen minutes or so they fired off blanks, in the hope of getting some response. But none came, and at five o'clock they were still hopelessly riding on.

Both men had been so intent upon their search, that they had scarcely noticed the gradual darkening of the sky, warning them of an approaching storm. It was not until they actually felt the drops upon their faces that they were aware that it was raining.

"There isn't a chance of any shelter, I'm afraid," said Bob, gloomily. "And it will soon be too dark to see anything. Hadn't we better turn back? The girls may be safe at camp now."

"No, I don't mean to give up till our food's all gone," replied Kirk, firmly. "Think if they should be out here alone all night—without a bite to eat! No, you can turn back if you want to, but I'm going on."

Unwilling to desert his companion, Bob too pressed steadily onward, but with little hope of success in his heart. It was only when they suddenly

spied a little cabin through the increasing grayness, that he began to feel more cheerful.

"Perhaps they have found shelter there!" he cried. "At any rate we can stay there till the worst of the storm is over."

Upon examination, the small, wooden building proved to be as deserted as those near the mine shafts which they had passed on the first day of their trip. A rough fire-place, a wooden bench, and a shelf on one side were its only furnishings.

Both boys sat down wearily upon the bench, for they were worn out with worry and with the severity of the climb. Both were hungry, too; but it seemed awful to them to think of eating when Marjorie and Daisy were probably almost starving.

"One thing good," remarked Bob, as he looked about the cabin, "both these girls are good sports. They're not the kind to wring their hands and go into hysterics. And they're both good horse-women."

"Yes, that's certainly true," said Kirk.

"You like them both pretty well, don't you Kirk?" asked Bob, in a lighter tone. "Especially Marj?"

"Yes, I like them both, as well as any girls," answered his companion, wearily. "But I can't say I like either better than the other."

The conversation was abruptly interrupted by a

continued knocking at the heavy wooden door of the cabin. The sound was not loud, but regular.

"What's that?" demanded Bob. "Funny, if it's a person, that he doesn't walk in!"

"He probably expects to find the cabin inhabited," remarked Kirk.

"Well, I'll open the door, anyhow, and see!"

Bob jumped up and started for the door.

"Wait!" commanded Kirk, quietly. "Let's be prepared! This intruder might be an unpleasant sort of person—might even be Indians." He drew his revolver from the holster on his hip. "Now I'm ready! Go ahead, but get back of the door when you open it."

Bob touched the bolt cautiously, half hoping that some thrilling adventure might ensue. It would at least take their minds temporarily away from the worry which they felt for the lost girls.

With a sudden, sharp, jerk, he pulled the door wide open, casting a swift glance at the visitors before he followed the precaution of stepping behind it. To his amazement, however, no rough, masculine characters confronted him; but two very forlorn wet girls. Daisy and Marjorie were standing at the door, holding on to their horses' bridles!

The girls' expressions changed quickly from apprehension and hostility to joy and thankfulness. Dropping the horses' bridles, they both rushed into

the cabin, almost embracing Kirk and Bob at the pleasure of seeing their familiar faces.

"But how did you ever get here?" demanded Marjorie, as soon as she could get her breath. "Are we anywhere near camp?"

"No—miles away!" laughed Kirk. "But how did you girls ever get here? We've been out hunting for you!"

"I think I had better go out and put your horses with ours," interrupted Bob. "It's a sort of shelter, behind the cabin. I'll be right back."

While he was gone, the girls took off their hats, whose brims were still dripping pools of water, and made an attempt to get dry. Kirk went to his bag and drew out some bread for them, which he told them to eat at once. When Bob returned, their first pangs of hunger were somewhat satisfied, and Marjorie started to explain their plight as well as she could.

"We didn't even know we were off the trail," she said, "until we suddenly began to get hungry. I looked at my watch, and was surprised to find that it was almost noon. So we turned about, and went back until we found another trail.

"We kept on that for a long time without success, and then we knew we were hopelessly lost. We hadn't an idea what to do.

"And just as we were trying to map out some sort

of scheme, it began to rain. Of course you know how hard it rained, too, and we naturally looked for shelter.

"Suddenly we spied a big rock, hanging over a hollow in the ground. At least, we decided, this would protect us on one side, and we know there was no use of wandering about wildly in the rain. So we got off our horses and tied them to the only tree in sight. Then we went under our rock."

"And it was a real good shelter, too," put in Daisy. "The rain seemed to be coming the other direction, and we were quite dry."

"We must have sat there for half an hour, when as you remember, the storm began to abate a little. Then we resolved to go out again. But we had ridden for only about fifteen minutes when it began again, harder than ever. And we couldn't find our rock!"

"Je-rusalem!" exclaimed Bob. "That was tough!"

"Well, we just about despaired," said Marjorie. "Then we thought if we could get higher up, maybe we could see where we were. So we made for this spot. Imagine our joy when we found this cabin!"

"And our greater joy in finding you two!" added Daisy. "Now tell us how you happened to be here."

Briefly the young men related their adventures, stating, of course, that they—the two girls—were the object of their search.

"And now what to do?" asked Bob.

Kirk thought seriously for a moment; then he came forth with a plan.

"Let's have supper now, and then Bob can ride right back to the camp, and tell them the good news. It would be too late for you girls to go, after your hard day, and besides, it may rain. So we'll stay here—you girls can have the cabin, and I'll sleep somewhere near outside. Then tomorrow we'll start early for camp."

After the boys made a fire in the fire-place, the girls cooked supper, glad of the opportunity to get warm and dry. In spite of the bread they had already eaten, both Marjorie and Daisy were still very hungry. With the exception of what they were saving for breakfast, they ate everything in sight.

When the meal was finally concluded, Bob rose reluctantly to go. The rain had stopped, and there was a beautiful sunset over the hills. Marjorie and Daisy and Kirk went out doors to see it, and to wave boodbye to their messenger.

"My, but we were lucky!" breathed Marjorie, as she turned into the cabin, to clear away the supper.

"I'll say we were!" added Daisy, fervently.

CHAPTER XV.

REVELATIONS.

WHILE the girls busied themselves in the cabin, Kirk went to look after the horses, and to find himself a place for the night. The ground was still wet, but he felt that with the protection of his poncho he could manage for one night.

"It does seem selfish to keep this cabin," remarked Marjorie, when they were alone, "when the ground will be so wet for Kirk. Still, there are two of us, and only one of him. And," she added, "besides, we're girls."

"I don't really think Kirk minds," said Daisy. "He isn't one bit selfish."

"No, he isn't! And by the way, Daisy, don't you like him a whole lot better than you did at first?"

"Yes, only that I always did like him. And I never blamed him in the least for running away from Irene Judson so persistently."

"Well, he's been awfully nice to me lately," said Marjorie. "When we were fishing together yester-

day morning, I told him about the radio, and he is going to order it for me when we get back to camp, and will help put it up when it comes."

"That's great!" exclaimed Daisy. "Do you know, Marj, I was hoping he would be the one you would ask. He seem's so capable. But don't you hope we get it soon?"

"I certainly do!" replied Marjorie. "But I guess we will, for everything seems to be going so well with the troop. Only—we haven't found another troop good-turn!"

"No, but we soon will, somehow," said her companion, cheerfully. "We always do. I'll leave it to you. You'll find a forest fire to stop, or a doctor's life to save, or—"

"That will do!" commanded Marjorie, sternly. She was too modest to listen indefinitely to an account of her previous good deeds. "Come, let's go sit in the doorway, and watch for Kirk."

They sat for a short time, watching the fading light in the sky, and talking little. At last the young man returned, bringing his folding cup filled with water for them.

"There's a spring not far away," he said, as he handed Marjorie the cup. "Everything's very convenient, and we're lucky! After a good night's sleep, we ought to get to the camp in fair time tomorrow."

"Well, I hope we don't see any bears tonight," remarked Daisy. "Although Marj and I would be pretty safe. But you must be careful, Kirk!"

"Oh, I'm a light sleeper," he replied, carelessly. "But I believe I would like a fire. Suppose I make one now, and we can sit around it till time to turn in? Then we wouldn't have to go into that stuffy cabin."

The girls agreed heartily with the plan, and Daisy went into the cabin to bring out the remaining dry wood. Before long a bright cheerful blaze was crackling in front of them.

For some time no one said anything. Each was absorbed in his or her own thoughts.

Still gazing into the fire, Kirk suddenly broke the silence by speaking about himself.

"Girls," he began, "you have been wondering about me, I know, and thinking I am rather queer. Well, I guess I am! When I came to the ranch early in the summer, I felt as if I would never want to talk to anybody, or make friends with anybody again. But lately—through the influence of several of the boys, and of you two Girl Scouts, I've begun to feel more like a human-being again. And so now that you are under my care tonight, dependent as it were upon me, I want to tell you a little bit about myself. In fact, I just can't keep it any longer: *I am Olive's husband!*"

"What? What?" cried Daisy, staring at Kirk as if she thought he was crazy.

The young man had not meant to blurt out his announcement so bluntly; he was sorry to have startled the girls as he must have done.

"Yes," he went on to explain, "you see my name is Smith—Thomas Kirk Smith—and when I came out here I began to use the middle name instead of the first, so that I might forget a little bit. But it didn't do any good. I've just been bitter—I hated everybody. Then when I met you, Daisy, and saw how self-controlled you were, with the same trouble as mine, I began to be ashamed."

As he spoke of his sorrow in his quiet voice, without even looking at the girls, both were even more impressed by his suffering than by the strangeness of the fact that he was the man who, on account of Daisy's sister, was so often in their thoughts. The whole thing was incredible: that here on this lonely ranch in Wyoming, they should find, not the girl whom they were seeking, but her husband! They knew now that Kirk was speaking the truth, and yet it seemed miraculous.

"Yes," said Daisy, after the first excitement of the revelation was over, "of course I noticed that your name was Smith—for no matter how often I hear it, it always startles me. But, knowing that your first name was different, I never gave it a

second thought. For who would ever think of finding you here?"

"It was a coincidence," he said. "I was so run down last Spring that I just had to go somewhere. And I'd been out here before, not on this ranch, but in the same country, so I thought this would be the best place. Now I'm glad I did."

"And you have heard nothing?" asked Daisy, softly.

"Nothing," replied Kirk, disconsolately. "Daisy, we must face the facts: *there is nothing to hear!* For if Olive were alive, she would surely have come back to me." His voice broke, and he added another sentence almost to himself. "It was such a little quarrel."

"Yes, I know," whispered Daisy, the tears running down her cheeks.

Marjorie, who had always shared Daisy's trouble as her very own, now seemed to enter more sympathetically than ever into the grief of these two people, whom she admired so much. Desperately, she searched her heart for some words of comfort to utter, but in vain. She could not express what she felt.

"I wish you would tell me more about Olive," said Kirk, gently. "You know that I had known her for such a short time—only a week at a summer resort—before we were married. And then it was

only a little over a month later that—that—Olive wasn't the sort of girl to harbor resentment, was she?"

"No indeed!" exclaimed Daisy. "She always had a fiery temper, but she was over it in a minute when she got angry. And she's very forgiving."

"I'm thankful to hear you say that, Daisy. Now I want to ask you a question—you must forgive me for putting it, but it worries me so—do you suppose that Olive could have committed suicide?"

Daisy winced at the question—the idea was so horrible. How could her sister think of such a thing, with the prospect of such a happy life before her! Daisy glanced at Kirk; now that she understood him, he seemed to possess all the qualities that the normal girl would desire in a husband. And Olive was the sort of girl to appreciate this. No, the thing was inconceivable; whatever fate Olive had met, it could not have been a suicidal death; of this her sister was sure.

"No, Kirk; she isn't that kind of a girl. She wouldn't really want to, either. I think you can be satisfied about that."

"Really?" cried the young man, hopefully. "Anything but that! For then I should feel that I had killed her, and that it was all my fault."

"No, if she is dead, it's from some cause beyond either your or her power."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Kirk, slowly. "You know she told me as she went out of the door she was ill. And to rush out to exposure, without proper protection—that would probably kill her."

"But if she were dead, we would be so likely to have heard about it," objected Daisy, returning to her former hopeful attitude.

"I think the same thing would apply if she were alive," said Kirk, sadly. "She could have died in some lonely place, or have fallen into the river, and perhaps nobody would know a thing about it. I watch the papers for accidents to unidentified people, but I have never found any description at all like her."

Although Marjorie had taken practically no part in the conversation, the strain of it all was telling upon her as well as upon the other two. She fidgeted uneasily; the growing darkness, the loneliness, the gloominess of the subject depressed her so that she feared that she too might burst out crying. Kirk noticed her nervousness, and knew that it would be best to talk of something else.

Skillfully turning the conversation to scout topics, he drew both girls' thoughts back to happier channels. He went into details about the radio, making it seem so fascinating that they could hardly wait for their own instrument to arrive. Finally, both Marjorie and Daisy realized that they were sleepy,

and that even the prospect of a hard bed did not keep them from looking forward to their night's rest.

"You're sure they'll wait for us to go up that mountain tomorrow?" she asked Kirk, as she and Daisy prepared to go into the cabin.

"Positive!" replied the young man. "But we must start early in the morning!"

"We will!" said Marjorie.

"And it's going to be a glorious day," added Daisy, gazing in admiration at the stars.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN'S MISSION.

It was the first of August, and as yet John Hadley had received no answer to the letter he had written some time ago to Marjorie. He watched anxiously for a letter from her, which would reassure him as the continuation of their friendship. But it did not come.

He mentioned the fact to Dorothy Snyder when he next saw her at Cape May. She had advised him to write to Marjorie, and had attributed the girl's silence to his failure to start the correspondence again; now he was proving that she was wrong. Evidently Marjorie did not care anything about him after all.

"She probably has a good many interests," said Dorothy, consolingly.

"She always has a lot of interests," he admitted, grudgingly. "And probably they're in the form of young men at the ranch now!"

"Not necessarily," said Dorothy. "Didn't you

say she is a Girl Scout? Well, they always have lots to do. And if she is thinking about graduating, and going to college—"

"She did graduate from Miss Allen's Boarding School this summer," interrupted John. "And I believe she is planning to go to college in the Fall."

"Miss Allen's Boarding School!" repeated Dorothy, almost to herself. "Where have I heard of that school before?"

"You probably knew somebody who went there," suggested John, glancing critically at the girl. She seemed exactly the type of young woman that one usually found at Miss Allen's.

"Yes, yes, perhaps," she replied hastily, growing very red and embarrassed. Always, John noticed, when the conversation showed signs of becoming personal, she grew alarmed, and instantly she was on her guard. He had observed this so many times that he resolved to question his mother more in detail about her. Who was Dorothy Snyder, and what was it she feared? Perhaps they were unwittingly harboring a criminal in their home.

As soon as he found an opportunity, he put the question to Mrs. Hadley.

"Mother," he said, when they were alone that evening, "what do you make of Dorothy?"

"What do you mean, John?" asked Mrs. Hadley, looking up from her sewing.

"You know what I mean—who she is, and where does she come from?"

"She comes from a little town in New York state, and her people are all dead."

"But what happened that made her so ill, and so penniless? And yet she said she had never worked before."

Mrs. Hadley shook her head; she could not answer that question.

"I know nothing, except what she had volunteered to tell me. I never ask her about herself."

"But how did you find her? You never told me the whole story."

"She was sitting in a pavilion, her face buried in her hands, and sobbing very quietly. I went up and asked her if I could help her."

"And she accepted?"

"No, not right away. She said she was very ill, and had lost her money, and would be grateful if I could take her in for a night. Naturally I took her home. She gave her name as Dorothy Snyder, of Edgetown, New York."

"As you know, I took care of her till she got better. She never talked much, except to tell me how grateful she was for my kindness. Once she told me that she had been through an awful experience, and begged me not to ask her any questions. Of course I promised."

"Don't you suppose she will ever tell us about herself?"

"Yes, but I think she is trying to shield somebody or hide something, and will not tell till everything is cleared up."

"Do you—did you ever think she had done anything wrong herself?" John asked the question fearfully, as if he dreaded lest the answer might be in the affirmative.

"No," replied his mother, decidedly. "I am sure of the girl's innocence. I don't know how or why, but I am."

The young man breathed a sigh of relief, and yet he was not entirely satisfied. He longed to go to the bottom of the matter, to tear aside the veil, as it were, from Dorothy's obscurity, and have her for a friend as he might have any other normal girl.

He was glad, however, that she never avoided him now, that since he had told her about Marjorie, she raised no barrier to their continuous companionship during his visits to his mother. Accordingly, when he asked her to go for a walk with him on Sunday afternoon, she willingly agreed.

She seemed preoccupied at first, and they walked along in silence for a quarter of an hour. It was Dorothy who spoke first, surprising him by her remark.

"I am going to ask you to do me a great favor,

John," she began. "I don't want you to think I am forward or pushing, but I do want very much to meet those Girl Scouts from Miss Allen's school. I have a good reason, though it is a strange one; but I can't tell it to you now. Do you suppose that when they come back from the ranch in the Fall, it could possibly be arranged?

John wrinkled his brow. What, he wondered, could have prompted this strange request? Dorothy could not possibly be jealous of Marjorie—she had never cared for him in that way—nor did she seem like a social climber who wanted to meet all the people who were in good circumstances. Like all the other mysteries about this girl, he had to give this one up unsolved.

"Perhaps," he said, slowly. "But it would be hard to have any sort of party, for they will be so scattered. Five or six of them have graduated from Miss Allen's, and probably they will all be at different places. But I'll think about it. Is it—" he hesitated for a moment—"is it any one girl in particular that you want to meet?"

"No, indeed," she hastened to reassure him. "And you never need tell me which is the girl you care for. But I would love to see them together."

John was turning over in his mind how the thing could possibly be carried out. Dorothy so seldom asked him for anything that he hated to refuse her.

Suddenly his eyes lighted up with inspiration. He had it—the very thing! His mother might invite all eight of the girls for a week-end at Cape May, as a sort of return for the Wilkinson hospitality earlier in the summer. He told Dorothy of the idea.

"That's wonderful!" she cried. "But wouldn't it be too much work for your mother?"

"We could both turn in and help," said John.

"Of course we would. But—would the house be big enough for eight girls, besides us?"

"Yes, they enjoy sleeping in a bunch. We could get in some extra cots, and fit them up four in a room."

"Let's hurry back and ask your mother right away," suggested Dorothy.

More mystified than ever at this unusual display of enthusiasm, he complied with the girl's request. All the way back they talked of nothing else. He too was thrilled with the plan; he said he would take a room at the hotel and come in only for meals, so that the house would be freer for the girls.

As soon as they were home, they lost no time in putting the project before Mrs. Hadley. Always glad to comply with the young people's wishes, she readily fell in with the scheme, and seemed as pleased as they were. She suggested that they make a tour of inspection of the house with her, so that she might

assure herself of the plan's practicality. They began with the attic.

"These rooms are small," she said, throwing open the two doors and displaying the conventional attic rooms, with the slanting roofs besides the windows. "But they really aren't bad."

"They're very comfortable!" said Dorothy. "At least I find mine so."

"Well, then, that disposes of four girls, and there are two bedrooms besides mine on the second floor. Yes—" she was noting two or three things to attend to, as she talked—"we can put eight girls up, if John will move out."

"Of course I will!" he replied, readily.

"Then really the only thing that worries me is the dining room," she concluded. "Do you suppose we could get eleven people around our small table?"

"I'd just as soon be waitress," offered Dorothy; "and that would bring the number down to ten."

"Indeed you won't!" protested Mrs. Hadley. "When the party is given in your honor!"

"Suppose Dorothy and I both be 'waitresses'?" suggested John. "That would be only fair, if you do the cooking."

"I thought I'd get Eliza in to cook," said his mother.

"That's a good idea!" commented John. "Still,

I stick to the waitress plan. I think I'd make a hit in a cap and apron."

Dorothy laughed at the picture of John in a waitress's costume, and she too urged Mrs. Hadley to let them adopt the plan.

"Well, whatever you like," said the older woman. "And now since it's all settled, I guess I had better go write the letter."

But before she had reached her desk, the door-bell rang, and she went to answer it. A telegraph messenger asked whether Mr. John Hadley lived there.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Hadley, mechanically taking the envelope and signing the paper. Then, closing the door she handed the telegram to her son.

"I suppose your firm want you to go to New York or Boston, or some such place again," she said with resignation. "They seem to expect to send you all over the globe."

John smiled, and tore open the telegram.

"By George, I've got a real trip this time!" he exclaimed. "Two places in California, and a stop in Wyoming on the way back!"

Neither Mrs. Hadley nor Dorothy shared the young man's enthusiasm; they were both thinking how lonely it would be for them, with him away for such a long time.

"And how long will you be gone?" asked Mrs.

Hadley, making a supreme effort to hide her dismay.

"I don't know. This says a letter follows."

"I wonder whether you start right from here."

"Probably," answered John, "or they would hardly have telegraphed."

"Will this—" began Dorothy, hesitating for a second,—"will this mean that our house-party has to be given up?"

"Certainly not!" replied John. "I'll surely be back by September, and even if I weren't, it would be all right to have it without me."

Neither woman said anything further; but Dorothy noticed that Mrs. Hadley gave up all idea of writing the invitation, for the time being, at least. Somehow, the house-party would seem flat without the presence of its originator, and neither of the others cared to press it. They busied themselves with the supper, and with the inspection of John's clothing, to be in readiness for the hasty summons that would probably come late that night.

Mrs. Hadley had already gone to bed when John received his special delivery letter. He and Dorothy had been sitting in the little parlor, reading a story aloud, when the messenger arrived. The girl watched him quietly as he perused its contents. First she noticed a slight frown on his face; but a moment later this was replaced by an ecstatic smile. John Hadley had wonderful news!

"By George!" he cried, handing the letter to his companion, "I'm to see *her!* To go to California first, and stop on my way back at the Hilton ranch, near Bailey, Wyoming, to deliver a radio to the Girl Scouts, and set it up. Oh, did you ever hear of such luck? It sounds like the Arabian Nights!"

Dorothy tried to enter whole-heartedly into his joy.

"It is wonderful, of course. And the Girl Scouts ordered their outfit from you?"

John examined the order, and nodded his head, smilingly.

"Then it must be all right with—with—you know, I don't know her name!" she added.

"I guess you are right," agreed John. "And now I must go wake mother, and tell her, for I start early in the morning."

"And when do you get back?"

"I don't know. My vacation comes the last two weeks in August, so—well—I might spend it on the ranch!"

"With the Girl Scouts!" added Dorothy. "I envy you, John!"

"Yes, it would be nice," he said. "And I could give them mother's invitation in person."

"And I do so hope they accept," said the girl, fervently. "Somehow, I feel as if my whole fate rested upon their decision."

John forgot for a moment his own affairs, in his surprise at what Dorothy was saying. Why, he asked himself again, did she care so much about the house-party, and in what way was her future dependent upon it? He looked at her questioningly; his eyes held the interrogation his lips dared not utter.

As Dorothy watched him, and noted his eager interest, she came to the sudden decision to tell him all that she knew of her past. Perhaps he would be able to help her; at any rate, he was too good a friend to betray her confidence.

"John," she said, in reply to his silent question, "I want to talk to you about myself. Have you time?"

"I certainly have," replied the young man.

For the next five minutes he listened to one of the strangest experiences he had ever heard. Dorothy's explanation was different from anything he had imagined, and more pitiful. Never in his life had he so longed to help anyone, and never, he thought, had he been so powerless.

"And may I tell mother?" he asked, when she had finished her story.

"I believe I would rather tell her myself—to-morrow," replied Dorothy. "For you will want to go and tell her your own news now."

"That is true," he said, rising, and extending his

hand. "And now goodnight, Dorothy, and goodbye; for I leave early in the morning."

"Goodbye," she answered, taking his hand. "And please don't tell my secret to anyone except *'the girl,'* will you?"

"I promise," he said, with sincerity.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SCOUT PARTY.

MARJORIE and Daisy slept well that night in the cabin, in spite of the hardness of their beds. They were too tired to dream about the strange revelation which they had just heard. When they awoke, they both felt cheerful; even Daisy had shaken off the unhappiness which Kirk's despair had caused her the night before. In the bright sunlight of this fresh, beautiful day she was ready to believe that her sister was still alive.

"Daisy," said Marjorie, as they were dressing, "do you know I feel more than ever as if I would like to give up everything else to find your sister. It seems as if something could be done. What do you think?"

"Yes, I think something more could. In the first place, we haven't told any of our friends, or Olive's friends, for fear of notoriety. But I think that's a mistake. Lots of people might see Olive somewhere and not think to mention the fact to us."

"And is that your mother's wish?" asked Marjorie.

"Yes, to keep it all as quiet as possible. I have been begging her to make the thing public—even to come out in the newspapers with a statement—and she has promised to do it in September if nothing happens before then."

"Kirk doesn't seem to want to do anything either, does he?"

"No, he certainly has surrendered to despair. Well, Marj, I'm glad to know about him, for we can maybe do something to make his life brighter during the rest of the visit. And—speaking of that—suppose we go out now, and see whether we can get his breakfast."

But much to their surprise, the girls found their breakfast all prepared for them. Kirk laughed good-naturedly at their amazement in finding the work all done.

As soon as they had concluded their meal of bacon and bread, they started back for camp. This time there was no dread of getting lost, no fear of a storm. They reached the camp in good time, and were greeted with joyous war whoops and numerous pistol shots; even the cook was waiting to see with his own eyes that the girls were safe.

Early in the afternoon the whole party started out again. Riding steadily upward to the top of the

mountain, they found the scenery even more wonderful than Mr. Hilton had depicted. Making their camp, they stayed there over night, and early the next morning started on the return trip to the ranch. This time the journey was less eventful; nothing occurred to prevent them from reaching home on scheduled time.

The five scouts who had taken the trip were now thoroughly accustomed to living out of doors, and would have been sorry indeed to return to civilization, had it not been for the prospect of seeing the other scouts. It seemed much longer than three days to Marjorie since she had said goodbye to Lily; she longed for the time when they were to see each other again.

And then, there was the mail. It had been almost a week since she had been away; surely there must be some letters for her. The last one she had received before her departure was from her brother Jack, telling her about having seen John Hadley with another girl at Cape May. Perhaps now she would get a letter from John, telling her about his new friend.

She found Lily and Doris and Mae sitting on the porch, watching for their return. In their hands they held the girls' mail, so that they might have it the minute they arrived.

Marjorie saw in a flash that among her letters

there was one from John Hadley. Her cheeks flushed, and her eyes lighted up with anticipation; it had been so long since she had heard from him.

But when she read the letter—a cool, impersonal sort of thing that seemed as if it had been written with an effort, she was conscious of a feeling of disappointment. Reluctantly she opened her other letters.

"What's John doing with himself?" asked Lily, who could not help noticing and recognizing the handwriting on the envelope.

"Working hard, going to Cape May every week-end with his mother. He gets his vacation the last two weeks in August." Marjorie answered mechanically, without raising her eyes from the letter she was reading.

"And that will be the end of ours, too!" sighed Lily. "It doesn't seem possible that it will soon be the first of August does it?"

"No, it doesn't. The Judson girls are going home then."

"So they are. I guess Kirk won't be sorry," said Lily. "By the way, do you like him any better since he did the rescue act, which Tom just told us about?"

Marjorie smiled half to herself. It was so hard to keep anything from Lily—to refrain from telling her the whole story. And yet Kirk had exacted the

promise, and she knew that she could not go back on it.

"Yes, he seemed awfully nice. You'll like him better, too, after the Judsons go home."

As soon as Marjorie had an opportunity she glanced slyly at Daisy, and found her smiling also. But neither girl said anything further.

"Did John say anything about the girl Jack saw him with?" asked Lily; for Marjorie had read her brother's letter aloud to her.

"No, he didn't" answered the other girl.

"Bad sign!" said Lily, jokingly.

"He can marry her for all of me," returned Marjorie, indifferently.

"Why, Marj! Are you in love with Kirk?" asked Lily.

"Mercy, no!" replied Marjorie, so emphatically that Lily wondered whether she had said anything awful.

When the girls took their places at the next meal, Marjorie found Kirk sitting beside her.

"I have written my letter," he said. "And if they are the up-to-date company that I think they are, they will probably reply by telegram."

"That would be great!" said Marjorie, realizing, of course, that Kirk referred to the radio, although he had not mentioned it.

"Do you suppose," asked Marjorie, "that there is

any chance of its arriving by the fifteenth? You know the trip to Yellowstone comes during the last two weeks in August, so we thought we should like to give a scout party the fifteenth, and present the radio to Mrs. Hilton. Do you think it would be safe to plan it for then?"

"Yes, I think so," replied Kirk, still keeping his voice to the undertone they had adopted for safety's sake. "Anyway, I can hurry them up with a telegram," he added.

"Then we'll go right ahead with the party," said Marjorie.

The next three weeks were filled with busy days for the scouts. Marjorie showed them that she was just as zealous about carrying out her plans as she was in making them; and the classes and study went on, in conjunction with the rides and walks and other regular activities on the ranch. Before the fifteenth of August had arrived, every single scout had sent in an examination paper to headquarters which would allow her, when she had passed her eighteenth birthday if she had not already done so, to be commissioned as a lieutenant. Alice, Daisy and Florence were fully prepared to pass the remaining tests to win their Golden Eaglet badges in the Fall; and although the other three girls were not yet quite ready, they had made good advancement. The radio was ordered and paid for; the scout party was

well organized. With one exception, Marjorie had carried out every project she had started, and she was nearly satisfied. If only the troop could in some way do its good-turn, then she would feel that her summer—her last one as an active member of Pansy troop—would be as profitable as it had been pleasant.

"Only three more days!" said Marjorie, folding the letter from her mother which promised a box of good things for the party, "Suppose the radio doesn't come!"

"Well, we'll have a good time anyhow!" returned Doris, cheerfully. "Think of all the wonderful food we're going to get. Has everybody heard from her mother?"

"Yes! Yes!" cried several of the girls at once.

"I haven't," said Daisy, after a pause. "I never even wrote!"

"Well, of course nobody wanted you to!" said Marjorie, with assurance. "Your mother certainly has enough to worry about."

"I thought no one would mind," replied the other girl, quietly.

Marjorie passed the next three days in feverish excitement, always on the alert to spy a messenger the minute he should arrive with the radio. But no one came, and she found it difficult not only to restrain her own impatience, but to keep the girls from

blurting out the secret. On the morning of the party, she gathered the scouts together in her cabin.

"We must go about our preparations for the party just the same," she told them, "and maybe it will come during the day. Mrs. Hilton is going to shut off the living room, and make the people use the back door all afternoon, so that we can decorate. So, if anybody wants to go riding, she had better go this morning!"

The girls accepted their lieutenant's advice as they accepted everything else she said and did—without question; and fell to work at their appointed tasks. Florence and Alice made the ice cream; Lily and Mae decorated the room with flowers, and crêpe paper which Mrs. Andrews had sent from New York; Ethel and Doris unpacked boxes of food, and Marjorie and Daisy arranged the dishes on the refreshment table at the side.

"Let's see how many of us there are," said Marjorie, as she was putting the silver on the table—"eight of us scouts, Mr. and Mrs. Hilton and Bob and Art, the two Melvilles, and Kirk—that makes fifteen. Why," she continued, as if the idea had just struck her, "that means eight girls and only five boys! That's hard on the dancing!"

"I'll tell you how we can fix that!" exclaimed Alice, who had finished making her ice cream, "I'll

wear my breeches and be a man. Who wants me for a partner?"

"I'd be charmed," said Florence, laughingly.

"Good work!" commented Marjorie. "Now there will be only one extra girl, and I will be that one, and play chaperone."

"Oh, everybody will dance with everybody else!" said Doris, lightly. "Even Alice needn't think she'll be able to keep the men away by wearing trousers!"

"Marj!" said Alice, abruptly, "what does Kirk have to say about the radio. Oh, if it doesn't come, I'll never forgive him!"

"But it wouldn't be his fault!" protested Daisy, who made it a point to defend the young man. "He certainly did his part."

"I bet he ordered it from some poor, one-horse-power company that delivers once in ten years," returned Alice.

"No, he didn't either!" said Marjorie, positively. "He ordered it from one of the best companies in the East!"

When supper was over, the scouts disappeared into their cabins to put on their uniforms. With the exception of Alice, who still insisted upon playing man, they all wore khaki dresses and black ties. In addition to their merit-badges, which covered the sleeves of all the girls in the patrol, Marjorie and Ethel wore

the Golden Eaglets they had won at the national training camp the preceding summer.

The party began at half-past seven, when the enclosure shutting off the living room from the dining room was removed, and the victrola began to play. All the guests arrived at once, and immediately the dancing began.

Marjorie took up her place at the victrola and resolutely remained there during three dances, refusing all invitations to dance on the plea of her duty. But at the end of that time, Mrs. Hilton insisted upon relieving her, and she yielded to Kirk's invitation.

Up to that time she had never danced with him—in fact, she had never seen him dance with any girl at all during her whole visit at the ranch, and she was both surprised and delighted to find him so accomplished. Half closing her eyes, she surrendered herself to the rhythm of the motion, talking little, and dreamily gliding about the big room under her partner's skillful direction. She had almost lost the sense of where she was, when a sharp knock at the screen door rudely brought her back to the real world. Abruptly the music ceased, and everyone stopped dancing. With an effort, Marjorie recalled the probable reason of the interruption: The Radio! Her heart beat wildly with excitement.

She was still standing with her arm resting on

Kirk's shoulder, as Bob Hilton opened the door to admit the stranger. With a gasp of astonishment, the girl's arm dropped to her side, and she gazed open-eyed at the visitor. It was John Hadley! Not the radio messenger, after all—but John Hadley, all the way from Cape May!

Instantly her face darkened, and a cold fear took possession of her. Was something wrong at home, and had they sent him to break the news to her gently? In her terror she gripped Kirk's hand tightly, her face showing anything but the welcome John had hoped for. Then, as if in a dream, she heard him speak.

"I would like to speak to the lieutenant of the Scout Troop," and, as she dropped Kirk's hand and stepped forward, he added in a lower tone, "I have your outfit from our company."

"Oh!" cried Marjorie, suddenly realizing what his presence meant, and smiling in intense relief. But what a strange coincidence that he—John Hadley—should bring it, and without her knowledge, too!

But without waiting to give expression to her own thoughts, she turned quickly to the rancher's wife.

"Mrs. Hilton," she began, speaking so that everyone in the room might hear, "we Girl Scouts have had such a wonderful time this summer that we wanted to present the ranch with something as a token of our appreciation. We had hoped that this

gift would come earlier, so that more of this summer's guests could enjoy it. But at least it will be here for next year."

"I therefore present you, in the name of the Girl Scouts of Pansy Troop, this radio set, which Mr. Hadley, the representative of the company from which it was ordered, will put up tomorrow."

Mr. and Mrs. Hilton were both so taken by surprise by the generosity and unusualness of the gift, that neither could find words with which to accept it. Marjorie and the other scouts saw their amazement and pleasure, and felt rewarded; and before Mrs. Hilton could even stammer out her thanks, both her sons had raised a noisy cry of approval. Their informality put the party into an uproar. As there were no more speeches to be made, someone started the music, and the dancing began again.

Marjorie, however, made no motion towards summoning her partner, but remained standing where she was, near the doorway, talking to John.

"I was so surprised to see you!" she said. "And right away I was scared, for fear something was wrong with my family!"

To John the remark seemed rather odd. Was she not expecting someone from his company—so why not him?

"Of course you couldn't know I would be the one to come," he said, "but then there was a chance. And

after you ordered the outfit from our company——"

"I didn't order it from anybody!" objected the girl. "I left that entirely to Kirk Smith—the young man with whom I was dancing when you came in!"

"It certainly was a coincidence!" he remarked, bitterly.

"Not at all!" replied Marjorie, graciously. "It just shows that yours is the best company in the market."

"Thanks," replied John, rather stiffly. Then, feeling it his duty to allow her to return to her partner, he asked her whether she did not want to finish her dance.

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Marjorie, with more indifference than John would have expected her to display. Then, turning to go, she added. "I'll see you later."

But John found no further opportunity to speak with Marjorie, for after a *Paul Jones,* refreshments were served, and there was no more dancing. He joined gaily in the general cheerfulness of his companions, pinning all his hopes upon the opportunities of the following day.

"Tomorrow!" he thought, as he sought his cabin at midnight. "Tomorrow! But I won't spend my vacation here if she doesn't want me!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRIP TO YELLOWSTONE.

EVERYONE was up early the following day to watch the installing of the radio. With the exception of Bob and Arthur, who were always obliged to go out for the horses, no one did any riding that day.

Kirk and John did most of the work, while the others stood around, longing to be of some assistance and asking innumerable questions.

"Will it last till next summer if we should come back?" inquired Mae.

"You mean *when* you come back!" corrected Tom Melville. "For, of course, you're coming."

"I hope so," answered John, smiling.

"How far do you think we can hear?" asked Bob. "San Francisco?"

"Probably. But surely Denver."

"Not New York?" said Lily, in a disappointed tone. She had thought that once you possessed the instrument you could hear any sending station in the world.

"Hardly," replied John. "It has to be a larger, more sensitive instrument to hear such distances. But I am sure you will listen in on lots of interesting things."

All this time Marjorie said nothing, for she knew that John preferred to work unmolested, if possible. But although she was quiet, he was by no means unaware of her presence, and before he had finished, he secured her promise to go for a little walk with him before supper.

When the young men had finally completed their work, and John had made his test to his own satisfaction, they listened eagerly for the first message. To the delight of everyone, it came soon—a weather report from Denver. After that there was a most entertaining concert.

"It certainly is nice that more than one person can hear at one time," remarked Arthur. "It was clever of you Girl Scouts to think of ordering this kind."

"Clever of Kirk!" corrected Marjorie, always desirous of giving credit where credit was due.

John glanced hastily at the young man whom Marjorie had praised, trying to ascertain whether he cared much about the tribute. But apparently Kirk had paid little or no attention to it, for he was explaining something to Arthur.

Shortly after five o'clock John met Marjorie in

front of the cabin, and they started for their walk. Both were secretly excited; there was so much to talk about, to clear up, before they could get back to their old intimate terms. But both hesitated to make the conversation personal, and for ten minutes or more they discussed the radio, the ranch, and the Girl Scout troop. At last Marjorie spoke of themselves.

"I got your letter, John," she said. "And I was going to answer it, but——"

"But you had a good many other things to think about. Well, I understand!" His tone was a trifle bitter.

Marjorie looked at him resentfully. What right had he to tease her, even thus subtly, about other men, when he had spent his summer dancing and flirting with another girl? She was about to make a retort, when she stopped suddenly, and asked instead how long he intended to stay.

"I don't know," he answered; "that depends upon —circumstances."

"What do you mean?" asked Marjorie, in a puzzled tone.

"Just that! I honestly don't know."

"Well, if you possibly can, you ought to stay for the Yellowstone trip. We're leaving tomorrow for a nine-day trip, and from what I understand, it is to be the experience of a life-time."

"But you know I can't ride, and wouldn't dare start off for such a long trip without any experience!" he protested.

"Oh, it isn't riding. We go in big cars. But don't let me persuade you if—if you are so anxious to get back to Cape May!"

John flushed at the taunt; for he knew now that Jack had told her about the dance. He wished he might explain everything—especially his last conversation with Dorothy Snyder before he left for the West. But this was neither the time nor the place for that. Instead, he took up Marjorie's challenge.

"Just to show you how wild I am to get back East, I'll stay here as long as you say—till you girls go back, if you are willing! Now what do you think of that?"

Marjorie regarded him coolly. He was saying these words for effect, she surmised.

"You know I wouldn't let you, for the sake of your job!"

"Oh, my job's all right; don't you worry about that. What do you say?"

"I dare you to stay!" flashed Marjorie, smiling at the childishness of it all.

"And I won't take your dare!" he replied. "But wait! Won't I be in the way—between you and Mr. Smith?"

It was Marjorie's turn to blush.

"No, there's nothing serious there, John. Kirk has cared for only one girl in all his life, and he has lost her. I don't think anyone will ever interest him again. He's rather nice, but he seems awfully old, and sad."

"Poor fellow!" said John, sympathetically. All his jealousy vanished in that moment.

Marjorie longed to say something more about the Cape May girl, but she hated to pry. Rather, she would wait until John mentioned her casually; and if he avoided her in his conversation, she would know that there was something serious between them. So she began again to talk on general topics, until it was time to go in to supper.

The interest in the radio was temporarily set aside by the imminence of the Yellowstone trip. Everyone on the ranch was planning to go, so the talk at supper was of little else.

"You're quite sure no bears will attack us?" asked Doris for perhaps the fifth time.

"No, I'm not sure," replied Mr. Hilton. "You may be very much annoyed by some tame bears who try to steal your food."

"I'd let them have it," said the girl, laughingly.

"You won't be the boss!" returned Arthur. "You see, on this trip we don't do our own cooking; we stop at regular organized camps for our food and beds."

"But if the bears are so tame, I should think it would be a good place to ride," she said.

"Lots of people do take horseback trips through the Park," said Kirk, "but it requires from about twenty to twenty-five days, and it's hardly worth while for anyone who has only two months to spend in the West. Now if you were like me, with a year or so before you——"

"Kirk!" cried Daisy. "Are you going to stay here next winter?"

"I have a job, haven't I, Mr. Hilton?" answered the young man. "I'm hired to take Bob's and Art's places, while they go to college."

"You must think you're good—taking the place of two men!" retorted Alice, always glad of an opportunity to get in a little dig at Kirk.

But Marjorie was thinking of his decision, and wondering at it. How could he, with such an unhappy memory to haunt him, wish to live so comparatively alone, so far away from civilization? Surely he had abandoned all hope!

Everyone at the ranch was delighted with John Hadley's decision to stay and join the party. Kirk Smith's satisfaction was as evident as that of anyone else, so that John finally forgot whatever jealousy he might have entertained at the beginning of his visit, and believed Marjorie implicitly.

Early the next morning they started out with their

simple luggage, in Ford cars, to drive to the entrance of the Park where they would change into the larger sight-seeing conveyances at the convenience of the public. To the girls, and to John Hadley, who had never been over this part of the country before, every detail was interesting. They watched for buffalo trails, for Indian graves, for extinct volcanoes, and for the queer little prairie-dog towns—barren wastes with tiny mounds every few feet apart, into which the small animals disappeared when the machine approached. They passed huge ranches; saw lofty mountains in the distance, whose summits were streaked with snow. Once it seemed to be raining on a distant hill, but overhead the sky was bright and clear.

The girls talked little during this ride, so interested were they in the strangeness of the scenery. Mr. Hilton noticed this, and smiled to himself; if they found this country fascinating, what would they think of the Yellowstone?

Mr. Hilton had planned for the party to enter the Park by way of Mammoth Springs, for by so doing, the girls would see the small geysers first, and gradually work up to the great ones. He wanted to impress upon their youthful minds a wonderful picture that would never be forgotten.

They stopped at a large hotel outside the Park for supper, planning to remain there over night. Every-

one was tired and in no mood for sight-seeing; a good night's rest would prepare them for the marvels they were about to behold on the morrow.

Marjorie settled herself comfortably on the porch after the meal was over, thinking happily of the pleasant time to come. She was to have nine days of rare pleasure, seeing beautiful sights, among people that she loved. And she had to admit to herself that John Hadley's presence added not a little to the joy of her anticipation. She believed she was having the time of her life.

In the days that followed, all the young people's wishes seemed to be gratified. They saw the Mammoth Hot Springs, larger than Niagara, but instead of being a single waterfall, it parted into a series of cascades, white as snow in some places, in others a dingy yellow. They discovered the craters of several extinct geysers, and marvelled at the exquisite pools of clear water, covering strangely colored rock formations. They saw the Constant Geyser, throwing up its jets of hot water in the center of a narrow, barren valley called the Norris Basin; and Old Faithful, with the clock not far off announcing the time of next hourly performance. They climbed up the steep, almost perpendicular cliff to get the view of Gibbon Falls, and they were impressed most of all by the Great Canyon, with all its marvellous colors. Once, to the extreme delight of the Girl Scouts, they

went swimming in a warm pool formed from the water of a geyser; but as the temperature was about ninety degrees, they did not care to remain in it long. Every night they stopped at one of the camps, had their supper, and attended the little entertainment the place provided for the guests' enjoyment; in the morning they went refreshed upon their way.

One of the funniest incidents of the whole trip was their first encounter with a bear. Luckily, Doris thought, they were in the bus; but afterward she laughed at her fears. They had not been long in the Park when a huge bear suddenly came out from behind some pine trees and planted himself directly in the way of the conveyance. It was impossible for the driver to go around him; so he put on the brakes. Doris and Mae both shrieked at the same time.

"Is he going to attack us?" asked Lily, rather frightened at his size.

The driver laughed.

"No—this is the highway robber," he replied. "He won't let our automobile pass until he has his ransom. He wants some food!"

Greatly amused, the different members of the party who had eatables with them offered them to the bear, and he accepted them greedily. When he was satisfied, he stepped aside and let them go on.

The little incident was enough to prove to Doris and the other more timid girls that they need not

be afraid of the bears; and from that time on, they laughed whenever they saw one, for they were reminded of this incident.

The trip was satisfactory in every detail; the weather had been excellent all along, the food and beds at the camps splendid, and the party in the best of spirits. Even Daisy had resolutely put aside her worry, entering fully into the enjoyment of those perfect days.

Marjorie and John had been much together during the trip, but seldom alone together. They were back on the old friendly basis again, but each was looking forward to the return to the ranch, when they could have some good quiet talks. For as yet John had said nothing about Dorothy, but something in his manner made Marjorie feel that the explanation would come later.

The whole party returned to the ranch on the twenty-sixth of August, five days before the scouts were scheduled to start for home.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE INVITATION.

THE five remaining days at the ranch seemed all too short to the Girl Scouts. Never had a summer passed so quickly; never did the approaching conclusion of a vacation bring so much unhappiness. It was to be the breaking up of the dear old senior patrol of Pansy troop, the severing of all their dearest ties, the beginning of a new life.

All the girls seemed anxious to pack these last five days as full as possible. In spite of the fact that they were rather tired from their strenuous trip, they insisted upon riding the very first day they were back.

"Please give me this afternoon!" begged John of Marjorie; for he had been looking forward to some time alone with the girl. "Just once?"

But Marjorie shook her head.

"No, John; I'm sorry, but I'm dying to get on my dear old horse again. You've no idea how I've missed her! Just think, I haven't seen her for ten whole days!"

"You didn't see me for almost ten weeks, but I didn't notice you grieving much!" argued the young man, gloomily.

"But you're not a horse—or rather, my horse!" she retorted.

John knew by the sparkle of her eyes that she was teasing him, that there was no use to expect her to give up her ride. Instead, he begged her to take a walk with him after supper.

"I can't do that either," she replied. "I have to write home."

"But that won't take all evening!"

"No, but I have other letters to write besides. And what about you—don't you have to write to your mother, and to your friends in Cape May?"

John smiled at the insinuation. How he wished Marjorie would give him an opportunity to tell Dorothy's story. But she seemed determined to avoid seeing him alone.

"No, I expect to write to mother this afternoon while you are out riding, and I have no other letters that need answering."

"Then why don't you join our party?" inquired Marjorie.

"You know why!" he replied, as if he were rather ashamed of his reason. "Because I can't ride well enough."

"But you have to learn some time!"

"I expect to learn—I am going out with Bob this afternoon. But I don't feel ready to join your party yet."

"Nothing but pride!" teased Marjorie. "Still, have it your own way. If you don't like our society—"

"Marjorie!" he exclaimed. "You know as well as I do—oh, of course you're only joking! But do let's be serious! You have got to promise me one afternoon—a whole day, if possible—before we leave. May I have tomorrow?"

"No, that's a special Girl Scout celebration—our last one alone with each other. We're going to take our lunches, and our horses, and go off for the whole day—without a single man to mar our pleasure!"

"Marjorie, you're cruel! Are you going to invent some excuse for every day? I wanted to have a good talk with you alone, to tell you about Dorothy Snyder—"

"About whom?" interrupted Marjorie, although she was sure this was the girl whom Jack had mentioned in his letter.

"Dorothy Snyder—my friend at Cape May. Did you ever meet her?"

"No. Why?"

"Nothing, except that she thought she had met some girls from Miss Allen's school."

Marjorie sighed wearily; after all, she was not so

much interested in this rival of hers since John had shown by his willingness to remain at the ranch, where his greatest interest lay. However, she did not intend to refuse his request; she meant to give him one afternoon before they left for the East.

"Well, if you really want to set a time," she said; "let's make it for the day after tomorrow."

"Fine!" cried John. "And what do you prefer to do?"

"I like canoeing best after riding," she said.

"Canoeing it shall be, then!" he agreed.

The next day John saw practically nothing of Marjorie. As she had told him, all the Girl Scouts left the ranch about nine o'clock in the morning with their lunches packed in their knapsacks, and started for their ride. Mrs. Hilton had given her consent rather grudgingly to such a venture, without the protection of anyone who was really familiar with the country. But the girls had begged so hard that she had seen what it meant to them to have this last excursion alone, and had finally given in. Marjorie assured her that after her own and Daisy's experience on the pack trip, she would be very careful not to encounter a similar disaster. So they rode off happily, unaware of the fact that both Kirk and John were fully prepared to go after them, in case they did not return at the appointed time.

"It certainly is sad to think this is the last time

the dear old patrol will be alone together," observed Doris, regretfully.

"Why!" exclaimed Marjorie, "you forget the trip home. We'll have all that time, and I'm even planning a last scout meeting for then."

"Just like you, Marj!" laughed Mae. "But we won't be entirely alone, because the Melville boys are going back on the same train, and their parents are going to join them at St. Paul."

"And how about John Hadley?" put in Lily. "Surely you didn't forget him?"

"No, I didn't forget him," replied Marjorie; "but I simply thought we wouldn't have to bother much with him!"

"Listen to the indifferent woman!" exclaimed Alice. "But you needn't put that on with us, Marj. It won't go."

All this time Marjorie was paying strict attention to the trail. She was leading the girls to a familiar spot, the destination of many a previous ride; for it was one which possessed the unusual attraction of trees. There they would eat their luncheon rest, and talk until it was time to come back.

Marjorie had planned no formal meeting for the day, but the conversation dwelt chiefly upon scout topics. She and Ethel and Doris took a solemn oath to start new troops in the Fall, and Daisy half promised to do the same. It was Marjorie's dream

that the great scout ideals, which the members of Pansy troop had learned to follow under the leadership of their captain, Mrs. Remington, should be passed on to other young girls.

The group sat for a long time among those few pine trees, discussing their past and their future; but it was their future that interested them most. It seemed as if they all dreaded to stop talking and mount their horses to return to the ranch. Marjorie, however, felt responsible, and was watching the time. At four o'clock she made the move to go.

"If we could only have one more reunion!" sighed Alice. "Marj, you always know how to manage things, won't you see if you can do something?"

"It would be great!" murmured Marjorie, without entertaining the slightest hope of such a possibility.

When the girls were within a mile of the ranch, they met Kirk and John, coming towards them, on horseback. Little did they know that these two young men had come out for the very purpose of finding them. Both of them, however, had too much tact to tell this to the girls, for they knew that Marjorie would have insisted that they were perfectly able to take care of themselves. Instead, John made some excuse of learning how to ride, and turned back to the ranch with the party. He made no attempt to ride beside Marjorie; he was content to remember that tomorrow was to be his day.

Although Marjorie would scarcely have confessed it to herself, she was looking forward to the following day with almost as much pleasure as John. When the time came, she met him on the porch as she had promised. Instead of the usual riding breeches and flannel shirt, she had substituted a simple summer dress, and the change made her seem even more attractive to the young man.

They left the ranch immediately after lunch, walking slowly, and talking about their recent trip as they went. John seemed as sorry as Marjorie that the vacation was almost over.

When they reached the water, Marjorie stepped into the canoe, intending to take her place in the bow; but John surprised her by asking her to sit in the middle.

"You can rest for one afternoon, can't you?" he pleaded. "It's so hard to talk when I have only your back to look at!"

Laughingly, Marjorie agreed, and seated herself upon a cushion on the bottom. She, too, wanted to have a confidential little chat.

It was not until they had gone for some distance, away from the shallow water, that John plunged into the subject in which he was so interested. He began by telling about his mother's invitation.

"Marjorie," he said,—"or rather, Lieutenant Marjorie, for I am asking you now as I would consult

the officer of Pansy troop, do you think your patrol would like to have a little week-end house party soon after we get back home?"

Before Marjorie answered, John knew by the sparkle of her eyes that the idea appealed to her. Had not the girls all expressed such a desire only the day before, and had not Alice put it up to her to provide the means? Naturally, she answered readily in the affirmative.

"We'd all love it!" she cried.

"That's bully! Well, you know mother has a cottage at Cape May—nothing gorgeous, you understand, but quite comfortable—and she would like to entertain the whole patrol before you separate. How about the week-end after we get home?"

"That would be perfectly heavenly!" she replied. "Oh, if you could know how much we wanted one more reunion; but we simply didn't see how we could manage it."

"Then that's settled. Will you invite the others for mother? She'd have written, but she thought it would be better to have me ask you privately first."

Marjorie dipped her hand into the water, forgetting for a moment the young man's presence in her joy at the thought of what was in store for the patrol. The scout good times were not over, then; she could still look forward to one more party with the members of the senior patrol. She would have

one more pleasant memory to store away for the time when she would be among strangers at college. How good Mrs. Hadley was to suggest such a thing! She was very happy.

But John abruptly interrupted her reverie.

"I want to tell you about Dorothy Snyder," he said.

"Yes?" she answered, without raising her eyes from the water.

"It was she who suggested the house party. She is so anxious to meet you Girl Scouts."

"Oh!" remarked Marjorie, a trifle coolly. "So she will be there?"

"You don't object, do you?" A cloud passed over John's face. "You see she lives with my mother."

"With you mother? Why? Is she a nurse? Is your mother so ill—?"

"No, no, not at all!" he replied, hastily. "I want to tell you her story—of the strange way she came to us. Mother found her alone and sick, in a pavilion."

In a few brief words he summed up the facts of Dorothy's case as he knew it, up to the time he received his telegram to go to the West. He recounted her strange desire to meet the Girl Scouts of Miss Allen's School, which at the time seemed to him unaccountable.

"But when I found out her real reason for want-

ing to meet you, as she told it to me that last night at home, I was very glad I had promised to do all in my power to grant her request. It seems that she had lost her memory, and could recall nothing except her escape from a hospital, when she wandered into the pavilion where mother found her. She does not even know her real name, but adopted Dorothy Snyder as the first one that came into her head.

"And then when she heard Miss Allen's School mentioned, she said something sounded strangely familiar; and when I mentioned Girl Scouts, she grew even more interested. So perhaps—"

But Marjorie, who had been leaning forward tensely, listening breathlessly to every word, interrupted him with a wild cry of delight. Perhaps—it was possible—that this girl might be Daisy's sister!

"Did she wear a wedding ring?" she demanded, seizing both of John's knees, as if she would like to shake the answer out of him, in order to get it more quickly.

John thoughtfully shook his head.

"No, she didn't. Why?"

"Oh!" she sighed, limply dropping back in the canoe. "I thought maybe she was Daisy's sister!"

"Daisy's sister?" repeated John, in perplexity. "Daisy who?"

"Daisy Gravers, of course. Was she pretty?"

"Yes, very. But—?"

"With a high color?" continued Marjorie, ignoring his desire for an explanation.

"No, she seemed rather pale to me."

Again Marjorie experienced disappointment. After all, it was a comparatively common thing for people to lose their memories temporarily, and it was too much to expect that the girl might be Olive. A tear crept into her eye, but she made no attempt to brush it away.

"Do tell me why you hoped Dorothy might be Daisy Gravers' sister!" persisted John, still in the dark about the situation.

Marjorie told her story, without mentioning Kirk's name; she recounted the strange disappearance, the search, and last of all, Pansy troop's resolution to do all in their power to find her. John listened in amazement, allowing himself to express the hope that Dorothy might after all be the girl they were seeking.

"For she could have thrown away her wedding ring, or left it at home, and she may have lost her color through her illness," he suggested.

Marjorie brightened a little at the words of hope.

"Have you a picture of her?" she asked.

"No, I haven't," he replied. "Has Daisy?"

"No, she hasn't one with her, and if she had, I wouldn't want to ask her, and probably raise her

hopes for nothing. No, let's wait until we get back, and find out for ourselves."

"And if it should be—"

"And if it should be! The joy, the happiness to Daisy, and her family, and the Girl Scouts—and Kirk!"

"Kirk?" repeated John, in surprise. "Kirk Smith?"

"Yes," replied Marjorie. "Kirk is Olive's husband!"

CHAPTER XX.

MARJORIE'S GOOD TURN.

After her talk with John, Marjorie felt as if she could not endure the days of waiting, until she would have a chance to put her hopes to the test. Three days previous she had wished that the summer, with its glorious days of riding, might never come to an end; now, it could not pass quickly enough. She was restless and excited, unable to carry on a connected conversation with any of the girls. Several times she found herself on the point of confiding her hopes to Lily or Daisy; but, recalling how small were the chances of the girl's proving to be Olive, she resolutely restrained herself. The other scouts noticed her preoccupation and smiled knowingly; they attributed her absent-mindedness to the presence of John Hadley.

She lost no time, however, in telling them of Mrs. Hadley's invitation. Alice and Lily were wild with delight, and most of the others seemed pleased. Only Daisy was doubtful about accepting it.

"I hardly see how I could, Marj," she said. "You know public school begins the eighth of September, and I have to be on the job at the very start. Now we don't get home till the fourth, and you know how much there always is to do. I'm afraid I can't very well arrange it, much as I should like to."

Marjorie showed her disappointment plainly. Was her whole plan to fall through, then, and was she not to know with certainty whether her expectancy was to be fulfilled? She resolved to try in every way to persuade Daisy to reconsider her decision.

"But you won't be working over the week-end!" she pleaded.

"No, but it's pretty far from where we live to Cape May. I mean, that after this summer's vacation, I really can't afford the expense."

Marjorie searched her mind for a method of persuasion.

"Would you consider coming as my treat?" she said. "It would make my good time so much greater to have you. Please!"

But Daisy shook her head firmly.

"It's impossible, Marj, thank you just the same! Even if it weren't for the expense, I really oughtn't to leave mother. It's been hard enough for her already."

Reluctantly, Marjorie accepted her refusal, for she could not help seeing that Daisy was right. As

she said, it would be selfish of her to leave her mother again; and Daisy was never selfish. Perhaps, too, it might be better. If the girl were not Olive, there would be no use in dragging Daisy away from her home; and if she should turn out to be the missing sister, it might even be wiser to break the news to both girls less abruptly. Such a shock might prove disastrous to either or both of them, coming as it would, after the long strain.

So the rest of the scouts discussed the invitation and decided that the first week-end after they had returned to the East would be most suitable. Accordingly, Marjorie wrote to Mrs. Hadley immediately.

The evening before the scouts were to leave, Kirk Smith asked Marjorie and Daisy to go out with him to see the moon. Marjorie surmised that he wanted a little last talk with them privately.

"Daisy," he began, as soon as they were away from the cabin, "suppose we don't write to each other? It would be too much—I couldn't bear the excitement of getting a letter from you and finding no news of Olive. And I'm sure you would feel the same, if you heard from me. So, let's agree not to write, unless we have something definite to communicate. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes," murmured Daisy, sadly.

Kirk turned to Marjorie.

"On the contrary, Marjorie, I should be glad to hear from you about the scouts, and whatever news you can find for a lonely man here on the ranch. When you decide to announce your engagement—" his eyes twinkled mischievously for a moment—"be sure to tell me about it. And by the way, I think he's mighty fine!"

Marjorie blushed in embarrassment.

"Don't, Kirk—there's nothing to it—now, at any rate. I'll be at college four years, and all sorts of things can happen during that time."

It was all Marjorie could do to keep from telling them both of her hopes, but again she resolutely suppressed the desire. Both Daisy and Kirk realized that she was unusually happy, but both supposed it was because of her own joyful existence. Neither realized that it took something deeper than that to stir the very depths of the girl's nature. So she managed to talk of indifferent things, and soon suggested that they go in, to spend the rest of their time with the Hiltons.

With the exception of the latter and Kirk Smith, everyone was leaving the ranch on the morrow. The Melville boys were going East to college, and their parents were to board their train at St. Paul. So the scouts were assured of a chaperone.

With the additional members to the party, the journey proved even more delightful to the girls than

the trip out. Only Daisy and Marjorie were particularly anxious to reach home.

They arrived at New York on Tuesday, and were to separate until the following Saturday, when they were to go to Cape May.

"Are you going to tell your mother about our secret?" whispered Marjorie, as she said goodbye to John.

"Yes, I would if I saw her, but I won't see her before you do—on Saturday. Because I don't feel as if it were the sort of thing to communicate in a letter," he added.

"No, neither do I," agreed Marjorie.

"And after all, we have only four days to wait!"

Four days! Marjorie kept repeating the words over and over to herself, as if in some way she might learn patience from them. Hardly was she in her own house when she told her mother the whole story, and would talk of nothing else. It seemed as if the ranch and the summer's pleasures were forgotten; her only thought was to solve this mystery about Olive, and to render this inestimable good turn to Kirk and the members of Daisy's family. She displayed no interest at all in shopping, or in preparing for college. After one day passed, she decided that she could not possibly wait until Saturday to know the best—or the worst. She must go to Cape May,

immediately; she could not sleep until she had found out.

"I'm going to telegraph Mrs. Hadley," she told her mother on Thursday morning. "I hardly slept at all last night, and I am so restless I can't do anything in the day time."

"But my dear," remonstrated her mother, "there really isn't one chance in a hundred of this girl's being Olive Gravers. There are so many of these amnesia victims—you read about them every day in the papers. Or this Snyder girl might be an escaped criminal, hiding under some such pretence."

Marjorie looked hurt at her mother's words.

"And besides—there's the dressmaker. It's very important for you to be here to get your new clothes ready for college."

"Bother clothes!" cried the girl, with her usual indifference. "I'm going to Cape May—this very afternoon—unless you forbid it!"

"Do as you like," sighed Mrs. Wilkinson with resignation.

Mrs. Hadley received Marjorie's telegram while she was at luncheon. She read it and handed it to Dorothy.

Dorothy scanned it, frowned, and half closed her eyes. The name sounded strangely familiar.

"Marjorie Wilkinson?" she repeated. "Where have I heard that name before?"

"You've probably heard John and me speak of her," said Mrs. Hadley. "Now what do you suppose she wants? I wonder if John proposed—"

But Dorothy was not listening.

"I've heard you speak of a Marjorie, but you never mentioned her last name. What school did she go to?"

"She graduated from Miss Allen's Boarding School last June," replied Mrs. Hadley.

"Yes, yes, of course. That is familiar too. Somebody I knew went there—some relative of mine—"

"Yes?" said Mrs. Hadley, now giving the girl her undivided attention. Perhaps the presence of Marjorie Wilkinson would help to make her remember who she was. "Can't you recall the name of the relative?"

"No, but she was a near one. Oh, I wish—" But Dorothy's voice trailed off sadly; her mind had come up against a blank wall.

"Well, cheer up!" said the other, encouragingly. "Marjorie can probably tell you the name of every girl in the school—for I believe it isn't a very large one. And then surely you will know."

Dorothy's eyes gleamed with excitement.

"I believe I'll stay home from work, and go to meet Miss Wilkinson, if you will let me," she said.

"Of course, dear," replied Mrs. Hadley, kindly.

It would indeed have been hard to tell which was

more eager to have that train reach its destination—Marjorie or Dorothy. Both girls felt that so much depended upon the meeting; both girls so dreaded the possibility of a disappointment.

Marjorie sat in the first car, and was the first person to get out of the train. Spying Mrs. Hadley almost immediately, she rushed excitedly forward. To her joy, the girl was with her; a girl who, though without the high color Daisy had described, fitted well to the description of Olive. Mrs. Hadley introduced the girls, and they began to walk towards the cottage.

"I was awfully glad you could come," remarked Mrs. Hadley, just as if she, instead of Marjorie, had done the inviting. "Can you stay until the house party?"

"Oh, thanks, but I'm afraid not. I'm having the dressmaker, but I was so bored and tired that I longed for a breath of sea air. Mother wouldn't let me go alone to a hotel, so I just begged to descend on you. Mother thought it was an awful imposition."

Thus she explained her visit.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Hadley. "I am only too delighted to have you. It's so quiet here now, that if it weren't for Dorothy, I simply couldn't stay."

When Marjorie went to her room, she asked the other girl to go with her. Dorothy was only too thankful to accept the invitation.

At first Marjorie talked of the seashore, the ranch, and the Girl Scouts, tactfully leading up to the mention of the name of the girl whom she hoped to be Dorothy's sister.

"I just graduated from Miss Allen's this summer, and I was so tired," she explained. "By the way, that reminds me—did you ever know a girl named Daisy Gravers?"

Marjorie pretended to say this casually, as she unfastened the strap of her pump, but really her hand was trembling so that she could hardly accomplish it. To her joy, Dorothy jumped suddenly to her feet, and, glancing up, Marjorie saw that her face was deathly white.

"Daisy Gravers—*my sister!*" she gasped. "And I'm Olive!"

Overcome by the realization, she sank to the floor in a dead faint.

Overjoyed as Marjorie was at the discovery, she was terrified at the effect on Olive. Suppose she became sick again, and lost her memory after this brief moment of recollection? She shuddered at the idea; such a thing would be ghastly! But at least it would be something to have found her. Then, suddenly, Marjorie pulled herself together; there was no time now for the indulgence of such feelings. She must act, and act quickly.

Summoning Mrs. Hadley to her aid, she succeeded

in getting Olive in bed. Then, while the older woman called a doctor, Marjorie sat at the bedside, watching her patient gradually regain consciousness. When at last she opened her eyes, she smiled faintly at Marjorie, but she made no attempt to talk.

After the doctor had gone, and the patient had slipped into a peaceful sleep, Marjorie told Mrs. Hadley the whole story.

"And now," she concluded, "it will remain to be seen whether she retains her memory, and pieces together her former life. What do you think would be the best course for us?"

"Wait, I should advise," replied Mrs. Hadley, "until she refers to it herself. Then draw her out very carefully."

Fortunately, Marjorie did not have to wait long for her opportunity. Early the next morning, when she carried Olive's tray up to her, the girl herself opened the conversation.

"Tell me about Daisy," she said, as she unfolded her napkin. "What has she been doing all summer?"

"She was with our patrol of scouts on the ranch this summer," replied Marjorie. "But she was so worried about you; for none of the family knew where you were." She hesitated a moment, as if she did not wish to be too abrupt. "Won't you please, Olive, tell me what you can remember about the last five months?"

"Well," answered the girl, slowly, "I got into a temper with somebody—" she thought hard for a minute—"a man—I guess it was dad—and flew out of the house. My head was aching terribly—but I walked—and walked. I—I spent a night on the ground—my, but it was cold and damp—and the next thing I knew I wakened up—in a ward—in a hospital—and the nurse told me I was getting better. They asked me my name, and I said Dorothy Snyder—I don't know why—and they looked as if they didn't believe me—because I didn't believe it myself, I guess. So, as soon as I was well enough, I ran away. I found I had been in Cape May. I wandered down to the ocean, and sat down in a pavilion. But I felt very weak and ill; I guess I cried. Then Mrs. Hadley found me, and you know the rest."

"But this man you quarreled with—you think it was your father—didn't you love him very much?"

Again Olive thought hard.

"Yes, I did . . . . No, it wasn't dad . . . . He was young, and handsome. Could I—could I have been engaged?"

"Or married?" suggested Marjorie, fearfully, in a whisper.

"Tommy!" cried Olive, triumphantly. "Tommy! My husband!" She seized Marjorie's hand in her ecstacy. "Oh, I'm so happy—so thankful to you!"

"Then—then shall I telegraph Mr. Smith, and your family, to come?" asked Marjorie.

"Yes! Yes! If you know where they are!

"I do!" replied Marjorie, almost beside herself with joy.

Then, quietly, she went out to perform the greatest good-turn of her scout career.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SCOUT'S SURPRISE.

As soon as Marjorie had sent her telegram, and had stopped in the kitchen to tell Mrs. Hadley the good news, she ran upstairs again to Olive. She knew that the other girl would be even more eager than she was to talk things over, and to learn of everything that had happened.

"I'm really not a bit sick," said Olive. "I don't see why I should stay in bed."

"Well, you might as well rest until supper and then get up. Because tomorrow will be a strenuous day, with all the scouts and your own family here."

"And how about Tommy?" asked Olive. "Does he have to come from Ohio?"

"Worse than that!" replied Marjorie. "Wyoming! And the funny part of it was that he was on the ranch with us all summer."

"Oh, tell me all about him—everything!" cried the girl, and Marjorie spent most of the morning relating even the minutest details about Kirk Smith.

Daisy, with her mother and father, arrived that

night, almost wild in their joy, after those dreadful months of uncertainty and fear. Their happiness in the reunion was wonderful to see; Marjorie and Mrs. Hadley both wiped tears from their eyes as they beheld it.

"And so you will be here for our house party after all!" said Marjorie, squeezing Daisy's hand.

"Yes," replied the girl, smiling. "And it is going to be the very nicest one I ever attended."

"What I am waiting for, is to see the other girls' surprise," continued Marjorie. "Shall we ask your mother and father to withdraw and have some fun teasing them?"

"I'd love it!" agreed Daisy, who was in for anything now.

The other six scouts, accompanied by John Hadley, arrived about noon on Saturday. Marjorie and Daisy met them at the train.

"Daisy!" they all exclaimed at once. "You here!"

"Yes," replied the girl, making a vain effort to disguise her happiness.

"You certainly look happy!" remarked Alice. "What has happened?"

"I'm going back to Miss Allen's in the Fall," she answered.

"Girls," said Marjorie, interrupting the conversation, "we have a guest with us. Somebody you'll no doubt be delighted to meet: Kirk Smith's wife!"

"Kirk Smith's wife!" repeated Alice. "When did he get married?"

"Last April," said Marjorie.

"And is he separated from her?" asked Ethel, breathlessly.

"Naturally! He wasn't with her this summer, was he?"

"I thought there was something queer about him," observed Alice. "Is she nice?"

"Charming."

"And does she love him?"

"She seems to."

"Well, where did you ever find her?" asked Florence.

"She is a friend of Mrs. Hadley's," answered Marjorie.

It was John's first knowledge of the fact that the mysterious girl whom his mother had been sheltering was really Daisy's sister, and he uttered a cry of joy. The girls all looked at him suspiciously.

"You're fooling us, like you and Lily did about the lieutenant!" was Alice's conclusion.

"I'm not—am I, John?"

"No, on my word of honor!"

Very shortly after, Marjorie proved to them that she had been telling the truth. She introduced them all to Mrs. Kirk Smith, a charming young woman of about twenty-two.

It was Ethel Todd's clever mind which put two and two together, and first made the discovery. This girl was a Mrs. Smith; she answered to Olive's description; moreover, Daisy's presence, her joy, her statement that she would return to Miss Allen's all led to the solution.

"Aren't you Daisy's sister?" she asked suddenly.

Marjorie and Daisy burst into laughter, as the realization dawned upon the other girls. Explanations followed, and Mr. and Mrs. Gravers appeared on the scene, to join in the merry-making.

The celebration that night was the happiest that Marjorie had ever attended. And, at the back of her mind, was always the thought of the reunion of husband and wife, which would take place the following week, and which would be the crowning event of all.

But when Daisy's family tried to put all the credit upon Marjorie, she modestly disclaimed it.

"It was really Mrs. Hadley's good-turn," she said.

"And I couldn't have done it without John," replied the older woman.

"But I couldn't have done anything without Marjorie," he said.

"Let's call it *'The Good-turn of the Senior Patrol,'* suggested Marjorie. "The senior patrol, and their loyal friends."

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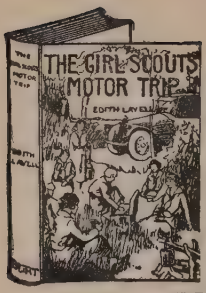

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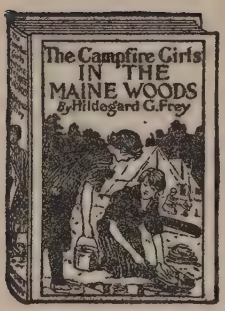

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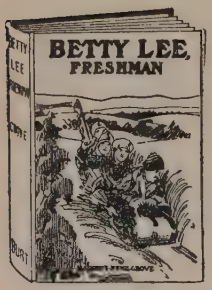

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